

The Logic of Political Survival in Turkish Politics: The Case of AKP

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To my lovely wife, Kübra...

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Summary

The thesis aims at exploring the logic of political survival in Turkish politics with analysing the case of Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP). This study consists of two stages. The research methodology and literature review of this research are examined in the first stage of this study. First, the literature of explanations concerning the logic of political survival in politics is explored. In the following section, case study analysis and elite interview methods are examined and reveal how they are combined in this study.

The second stage is to explore the logic of political survival in Turkish politics with the AKP case by empirical evidence. This study also uses evidence from elite interviews, party documents, public speeches, and developments and changes for exploring AKP's political survival in the next chapters. This evidence indicates that there are four independent variables of dependent variable which is AKP's political survival; -- the legitimization of AKP's conservatism (2002-2007), AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites (2007-2011), AKP's populism and authoritarianism (2011-2014) and the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership (2014-2018) -- within the AKP's four terms. In other words, this research offers a cause-and-effect mechanism between the four different policy approaches of the AKP's four periods and the AKP's political survival.

Indeed, the AKP has been the most successful political party at the point of ensuring political survival throughout its 16-year rule. In the literature, there are few studies analysing the 16-year rule of AKP government integrally. As a result of this limitation, the original contribution of this research is that it offers a holistic approach of the AKP government between 2002 and 2018 with using the concept of political survival which is not explored for the AKP case in the literature.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION.....	12
1.The General Context of the Research.....	13
2. Research Question.....	15
3. Structure of the Thesis	15
Chapter 1: Literature Review and Methodological Issues	19
1. Introduction.....	19
2. Literature Review	21
2.1. The Concept of Political Survival	21
2.1.1. AKP's Winning Coalition	27
2.1.2. The Concept of Selectorate Theory in Turkish Case.....	28
2.1.3. Critics of De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory.....	31
3. Research Methodology.....	37
3.1. Case-study Analysis.....	37
3.1.1. Case Study and Causal Mechanism.....	41
3.1.2. Case Study and Elite Interviewing.....	45
3.1.3. Intervening Variables in Causal Mechanisms.....	53
3.1.4. The Intervening Variables of This Research.....	56
4. Conclusion.....	58
Chapter 2: First Term of AKP (2002-2007): The Legitimization of AKP's Conservatism in Turkish Politics.....	60
1. Introduction.....	60
2. Milli Görüş (National Vision) Movement.....	62
3. The Origins of the AKP.....	70
3.1. The Closure of the Welfare Party.....	71
3.2. The Virtue Party.....	72
3.3. The Division within the <i>Milli Görüş</i> Movement.....	73
4. The Role of the 28 February Process on AKP's Political Survival.....	79

5. Turkey's EU Accession Process.....	83
6. The Importance of US and Western Support in the AKP's Establishment.....	88
7. The Concept of Conservative Democracy.....	90
8. Conclusion.....	100

Chapter 3: The Second Term of AKP's Rule (2007-2011): The Power Struggle Between AKP and Kemalist Secular Elites.....102

1. Introduction.....	102
2. The Beginning of the Clash Between the AKP and Kemalist Secular Elites.....	104
2.1. 2007 Presidential Election.....	107
2.2. The AKP's Closure Trial.....	111
3. The AKP's Reactions Against Kemalist Secular Elites.....	113
3.1. Ergenekon and Balyoz (Sledgehammer) Investigations.....	113
4. 'Not Enough But Yes' (<i>Yetmez Ama Evet</i>): 2010 Turkish Constitutional Referendum.....	125
5. Conclusion.....	128

Chapter 4: The Rise of Populism and Authoritarianism during the AKP's third term (2011-2014):130

1. Introduction.....	130
2. 2011 Parliamentary Election.....	131
3. The Rise of Authoritarianism and Islamist Populism in Turkish Politics.....	135
4. The Dissolution of the AKP's Large Coalition: 'We do not need Liberals'.....	140
5. The AKP's Mastery of Populism.....	142
5.1. Anti-Intellectualism.....	144
5.2. Anti Westernism and Anti-Kemalism.....	148
5.3. Conservative Family and Culture Policy.....	152
5.4. Erdoğan's Lower Class Mythology: White Turks vs. Black Turks.....	156
5.5. The Rise of Hypocritical Islamists in Turkey.....	162
6. Conclusion.....	167

Chapter 5: The Instrumentalisation of Islamism and Nationalism under Erdogan's Leadership (2014-2018).....169

1. Introduction.....	169
2. The Clash of Islamists: AKP vs Fethullah Gülen Movement.....	170
2.1. The History of Gülen Movement.....	170
2.2. A strategic alliance of necessity between AKP and Gülen Movement.....	174

3. The Conflict Between AKP and Kurdish Movement.....	188
3.1. From the ‘Kurdish opening’ to the ‘resolution process’.....	193
3.2. Native and National (<i>Yerli ve Milli</i>) Coalition.....	199
4. 2015 Parliamentary Elections.....	200
5. The Biggest Threat to AKP’s Political Survival: 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt.....	211
6. The Turkish Constitutional Referendum of April 2017.....	220
7. The Last Battle for AKP’s Political Survival: 24 June 2018 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections.....	227
8. Conclusion.....	231
 CONCLUSION	233
Bibliography	251
Appendix A: The List of Interviewees	297
Appendix B: The transcripts of Interviews	301

Abbreviations

AKP (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-Justice and Development Party)

ANAP (*Anavatan Partisi*-Motherland Party)

CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*-Republican People's Party)

DP (*Demokrat Parti*-Democrat Party)

DSP (*Demokratik Sol Parti*-Democratic Left Party)

DYP (*Doğru Yol Partisi*-True Path Party)

EU (European Union)

FP (*Fazilet Partisi*-Virtue Party)

GP (*Genç Parti*-Youth Party)

HDP (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*- Peoples' Democratic Party)

MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*-Nationalist Action Party)

MNP (*Milli Nizam Partisi*-National Order Party)

MP (*Millet Partisi*- Nation Party)

MSP (*Milli Selamet Partisi*-National Salvation Party)

MÜSİAD (Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği- Private Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)

RP (*Refah Partisi*-Welfare Party)

SP (*Saadet Partisi*-Felicity Party)

TUSKON (*Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu*- Turkish Confederation of Businessman and Industrialists)

TÜSİAD (*Türk Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği*-Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)

US (United States)

INTRODUCTION

1. The General Context of the Research

The thesis aims at exploring the logic of political survival in Turkish politics with analysing the case of Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*-AKP). This study consists of two stages. The research methodology and literature review of this research are examined in the first stage of this study. First, the literature of explanations concerning the logic of political survival in politics is explored. In the following section, case study analysis and elite interview methods are examined and reveal how they are combined in this study.

The second stage is to explore the logic of political survival in Turkish politics with the AKP case by empirical evidence. This study also uses evidence from elite interviews, party documents, public speeches, and developments and changes for exploring AKP's political survival in the next chapters. This evidence indicates that there are four independent variables of dependent variable which is AKP's political survival; -- the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism (2002-2007), AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites (2007-2011), AKP's populism and authoritarianism (2011-2014) and the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership (2014-2018) -- within the AKP's four terms. In other words, this research offers a cause-and-effect mechanism between the four different policy approaches of the AKP's four periods and the AKP's political survival.

Indeed, the AKP has been the most successful political party at the point of ensuring political survival throughout its 16-year rule. In the literature, few studies analysing the 16-year rule of AKP government integrally. As a result of this limitation, the original contribution of this research is that it offers a holistic approach of the AKP government between 2002 and 2018 with using the concept of political survival which is not explored for the AKP case in the literature.

2. Research Question

The central question of this research project is as follows: *How can AKP ensure its political survival in Turkish politics?* The sub-questions of this research are listed below:

- i. Can the legitimisation of the AKP's conservative identity be seen as a condition of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics in its first term? (Chapter 2)
- ii. To what extent is the AKP's power struggle the most important step towards AKP's survival in its second term? (Chapter 3)
- iii. Why is the correlation between the AKP's populism and AKP's political survival important for the rise of authoritarianism in Turkish politics between 2011 and 2014? (Chapter 4)
- iv. How can we explain the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership between 2014 and 2018 in light of the AKP's political survival? (Chapter 5)

3. Structure of the Thesis

The research methodology and literature review of this research are examined in Chapter 1. First, the literature of explanations concerning the logic of political survival in politics has been explored. In the following section, case study analysis and elite interview methods are examined and reveal how they are combined in this study. As discussed above, the holistic explanation of AKP's governance between 2002 and 2018 are explored and supported by empirical evidence. Case study

analysis requires the collection of data concerning key political decision-making and activity, often at the highest political level, and elite interviews will frequently be a critical strategy for obtaining this required evidence in this research. Drawing on interviews with a large number of politicians and academics as well as documentary sources, the AKP's rule in four separate periods will be analysed within four independent variables to understand the cause of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2002 and 2018. Finally, this chapter focuses on De Mesquita's selectorate theory, which attempts to provide a conceptual bridge for establishing a causal mechanism between these variables.

As mentioned above, this research requires empirical evidence in this step, and it also uses evidence from elite interviews, party documents, public speeches, and developments and changes in the AKP's policies in Chapters 2, 3, 4 and 5. This evidence indicates that there are four independent variables of dependent variable which is AKP's political survival; -- the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism (2002-2007), AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites (2007-2011), AKP's populism (2011-2014) and the combination of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership (2014-2018)-- within the AKP's four terms.

Chapter 2 explores why the legitimising of the AKP's conservative identity is the first independent variable of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2002 and 2007. It is a significant time period in showing the AKP's progression in Turkish democracy and for developing an understanding of how it legitimises its conservative identity. On the one hand, important internal factors during the AKP are founding of political concepts, including conservative democracy and other events such as the 28 February 1997 coup (soft coup) process affected. On the other hand, external factors, such as the increasing support of the United States and Western countries in the international context of 9/11, were also a factor. These internal and external factors also played a crucial role in the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism which is the first independent variable of the AKP's survival in Turkish politics.

For this reason, these factors are also intervening that affect the first independent variable. The role of intervening variables is important in legitimising the AKP's conservatism that has provided the survival of the AKP. At the same time, the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism is seen as a pre-condition for ensuring its political survival because AKP has not become a liberal centre-right party due to the legitimising of the AKP's conservatism. Moreover, this chapter also explores the conceptual relationship between these variables and De Mesquita's selectorate theory, which is explained in the Introduction and Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 focuses on the second term of AKP governance between 2007 and 2011. According to De Mesquita's selectorate theory, leaders or political parties consolidate their power by minimising their winning coalition against threats to their survival. AKP has faced two significant threats; the 2007 military coup attempt and the 2008 closure trial. After surviving these threats, the AKP chose to consolidate its power by fighting against secular Kemalist elites.

As mentioned before, there are four independent variables of AKP's survival in Turkish politics and the AKP's consolidation process is the second independent variable of this causal mechanism. According to De Mesquita, leaders or political parties follow politics to narrow down coalitions in the face of threats to their political survival. However, they should keep a large nominal selectorate and gain a mass voter base (which in Turkey is predominantly conservative). When the AKP began to fight against the secularist bureaucracy, it had to propagate an even more Islamic line to win the support of conservative voters in the elections. On the other hand, this policy change was a condition for the survival of the AKP and became the second independent variable of AKP's political survival between 2007 and 2011. This argument is supported by empirical evidence from the elite interviews, AKP policy documents, changes in the AKP's party structure, the documents of the constitutional clashes between the AKP and Kemalist elites, legal changes in Turkish politics, analysis of election results and public speeches by AKP's politicians and other documentary sources throughout Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 focuses on the third phase of the AKP, which is a real turning point in the rise of populism and authoritarianism. As discussed in previous chapters, one of the most important factors contributing to the survival of leaders or parties has been to keep the nominal selectorate (voters) as large as possible. During its second and third periods, the AKP broke that broad voting coalition from its founding philosophy and eliminated its partners one by one. The distinguishing feature of these coalition partners is that they defined themselves as specifically secular. As the tension with the secularists grew from 2007, the AKP had to assume policies that were more populist and authoritarian to retain the large nominal selectorate.

Hence, the impending question is, how did the AKP gain the support of the majority of voters? The answer to this question also highlights the third independent variable linking the cause-effect relationship of AKP's political survival. Chapter 4 focuses on the AKP's populist strategy which can be further expressed as the last independent variable to reveal the causal mechanism of AKP's survival in Turkish politics between 2011 and 2014. At this point, the AKP carried out a populist strategy between secular and conservative citizens in Turkey and consolidated the support of conservative voters.

This chapter uses empirical and statistical evidence, such as the 2014 local and presidential election results, public speeches by Erdoğan and other leading AKP members, important developments or events in Turkish politics through the rise of Islamism, and elite interviews with politicians, academics and student groups to prove this argument. Overall, Chapter 4 argues that AKP's polarisation strategy has contributed to the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2011 and 2014.

After the 2014 presidential elections, the AKP and leader Erdoğan's policy line evolved into a new way. With these elections, Erdoğan was convinced that the Kurdish movement and the Fethullah Gulen movement could become a threat to political survival. The AKP government needed a new paradigm to put this struggle into political adjustment. Although populist and authoritarian politics for secularists or

other opponents of the society have been on the agenda, Erdogan needed a different paradigm as a way to console the electoral base and increase its votes in the elections. At this point, Turkish nationalism, which started to rise in the Kurdish peace process, will run for the help of the AKP and Erdogan. In the Erdogan leadership of the AKP government, the effort to combine Islamism and nationalism will also be the fourth independent variable to explore the survival of the AKP in Chapter 5.

According to De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory, the winning coalition, which shrank due to threats to survival, will continue to shrink after 2014. The conflict between the Kurdish movement-the Fethullah Gülen movement and the AKP also supported this argument. The primary challenge in front of the AKP was how to keep the nominal selectorate large against the small winning coalition while this conflict was on the way. The AKP, which has adopted a nationalist discourse and action against both the Kurdish movement and the Fethullah Gülen movement, thought that it would enable the nationalist votes to be in the consulate itself. In this process, the coalition with the largest nationalist party, the MHP, and the Islamist-nationalist political line drawn by the AKP enabled to survive the AKP and Erdogan's rule in the 2015 Elections, 2017 Presidential Referendum and 2018 Elections. Here, Chapter 5 explores the cause-and-effect mechanism between the combination of Islamist-nationalist policy and the AKP's political survival by analysing election results and surveys between 2014 and 2018.

This thesis is followed by a general overview of the context and the thesis structure in Introduction. As can be seen from this structure, the thesis consists of two parts. Chapter 1, the first part of the thesis, will focus on the literature review of the logic of political survival and the methodological issues of the research. After Chapter 1, which is the skeleton of the thesis, how the theoretical perspective is applied to the AKP case in other chapters will be explored by clarifying the causal mechanism between variables.

Chapter 1: Literature Review and Methodological Issues

1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part, theoretical and historical approaches in the literature about the concept of political survival in politics, which is the main subject of the research, are examined in detail. In the second part, the research methodology that has been carried out is explained as well as why this research focuses on the case study analysis and elite interviewing in particular. Moreover, the relationship between the case study analysis and elite interview/causal mechanism is also explored in this chapter. De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory, a new conceptual bridge to explain the causal mechanism between independent and dependent variables (the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism- AKP's power struggle- the beginning of populist authoritarianism under AKP rule- the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership and the AKP's political survival), has been explained in Chapter 1.

The AKP's political survival analysed through four different independent variables within four chapters in this research. The first independent variable, the legitimisation of the AKP's conservative identity, explores the cause of AKP's political survival between 2002 and 2007. The AKP was established in 2001 and its presumed evolving 'Islamist' character by analysing the connections between external and internal factors in Turkish politics - on the one hand, the internal dynamics of the AKP's founding political principles and other events such as the 28 February coup (soft coup) process, and on the other, external factors such as the increasing support from the United States and Western countries for Turkey's democratically-elected pro-Islamic party in the international context of '9/11'. These internal and external factors helped to legitimize the AKP's conservatism in Turkish politics when it was established in 2001. Chapter 2 will examine these issues in detail.

The second independent variable of AKP's survival analyses the AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites between 2007 and 2011 in Chapter 3. The ongoing tensions between the AKP government and Kemalist bureaucracy in Turkish politics during this period are not only evident in the power struggle but also paradoxically contributed to increasing the AKP's conservative authoritarianism instead of the democratisation process in Turkey. The legitimisation of the AKP's conservative identity and the AKP's power struggle cannot be explained by existing debates in the literature. This research project draws on political survival theories such as Bruce Bueno De Mesquita's 'selectorate theory' (2011: 4), which explains the importance of the AKP's coalitional dynamics, in order to understand the AKP's political survival in the light of the power struggle between the AKP and the Kemalist bureaucracy.

The third independent variable explores the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival is the beginning of populist authoritarianism under AKP rule. Since 2011, the importance of the AKP's political survival continued with the narrowing of the winning coalition; De Mesquita's explanation was therefore still valid in this context. However, it can be said that the AKP pursued a populist strategy in order to maintain the nominal 'selectorate', cited in De Mesquita's theory as to gain the support of the mass of voters (De Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 5). This populist strategy was coated with an Islamist and authoritarian tone, given the impact of conservative voters, as the AKP's coalition did not have any secular partners or supporters after 2011. AKP's populism will be addressed in detail in Chapter 4, in which intervening variables are applied and contribute to the survival of the AKP.

The instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism is also addressed in this study as the last independent variable for explaining the survival of the AKP in Chapter 5. This research claims that Turkish politics has been affected by AKP's Islamism and nationalism parallel to a populist authoritarianism in the period between 2014 and 2018. This phenomenon led to the AKP's instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism to keep the nominal selectorate large and to ensure its political survival in the last period.

This research aims to explore four independent variables; the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism, AKP's power struggle, the beginning of populist authoritarianism under AKP rule and the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership, under AKP rule as a contributing factor to the AKP's political survival. This chapter will primarily complete the literature review of political survival and then explore the causal mechanism and other methodological issues between independent and dependent variables.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Concept of Political Survival

But since my intention is to say something that will prove of practical use to the listener, I have thought it proper to represent things as they are in real truth, rather than as they are imagined. Many have dreamed up republics which have never in truth been known to exist; the gulf between how one should live and how one does live is so wide that a man who neglects what is actually done for what should be done learns the way to self-destruction rather than self-preservation. The fact is that a man who wants to act virtuously in every way necessarily comes to grief among so many who are not virtuous. Therefore, if a prince wants to maintain his rule he must learn how not to be virtuous, and to make use of this or not according to need (Machiavelli, 1975: 49-50).

The concept of political survival is one of the central topics in the study of politics. Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1557), an Italian political thinker, outlined the importance of power and survival in his book, *The Prince* published in 1531. The above quote from *The Prince* shows how Machiavelli is trying to put political survival into a conceptual framework. According to Machiavelli, a ruler needs to adopt moral standards different to those of ordinary individuals to ensure the survival of the state. He argues that to be virtuous or to maintain moral values in accordance with public morality does not ensure the survival of a leader. A ruler who wants to hold on to power must learn how *not* be good and to know when it is necessary to use this ability (Matravers, Pike and Warburton, 2000: 12-13). A ruler needs to distinguish these moral values from the more specific sense of 'virtue', as deployed by Machiavelli, which includes the notion of being able to understand and act on the opportunities provided by time and fortune, to simulate different virtues or qualities as needed, and to combine cleverness and charisma (Lukes, 2001: 568-573).

Arguments concerning political survival have not come from Machiavelli alone. Since the beginning of politics itself, many political thinkers and philosophers have focused on this issue. One of them is ancient Chinese thinker Sun Tzu. Sun Tzu and Machiavelli are mentioned as part of the same pragmatic, realist approach, focusing on the arts of war rather than the art of peace as a means of ensuring political survival. Sun Tzu (2008: 1) emphasizes the importance of survival in his opening words: 'War is a matter of vital importance to the State; the provenance of life or death; the road to survival or ruin. It is mandatory that it be vitally studied'.

Another seminal political thinker on the issue of political survival is Thomas Hobbes. The state of nature is the situation where there is a state of 'war of every man against every man' as all men compete for survival (Hobbes, 2013). The fundamental law of survival is the reason for this state of affairs. This law states that in order to survive, any actions are lawful as long as they serve the aim of survival. In *The Leviathan*, he also concluded that, 'no king can be rich, nor glorious, nor secure, whose subjects are either poor, or contemptible, or too weak through want, or

dissension, to maintain a war against their enemies' (Hobbes, 2016: 163). Another important philosopher, Max Weber, emphasizes the importance of political survival over the concept of interest. According to Weber, the idea of interest is indeed of the essence of political survival. He states that 'Interest (material and ideal), not ideas, dominate directly the actions of men. Yet the 'images of the world' created by these ideas have very often served as switches determining the tracks on which the dynamism of interests kept actions moving' (Weber, 2017: 347-348).

One of the political scientists, Hans Morgenthau, focused on political survival in relation to power politics in the twentieth century. According to Morgenthau (1985), political survival is only a dominant, active interest under conditions of threat against the leaders or ruling parties in states. It is assumed that the survival of the political actor is valid as argued by Machiavelli. In Machiavelli, the political actor was 'the Prince', in Morgenthau, the main political actor is the sovereign state, regardless of whether that state is viewed as legitimate by any other criteria beyond their ability to manage and the control the citizens within their borders. Morgenthau states that 'while the individual has a moral right to sacrifice himself in defence of such a moral principle, the state has no right to let its moral disapprobation of the infringement of liberty get in the way of successful political action, itself inspired by the principle of national survival' (Morgenthau, 1985: 12).

The end of the twentieth century saw a number of studies on political survival by different thinkers. As far as a unified causal nexus is concerned, the analytical framework is built on the so-called logic of political survival. Building on insights that were proposed by Downs (1957), the concept of political survival has gained popularity in literature following Bueno de Mesquita et al.'s (2003) "selectorate" model.

Since the early 1980s, the world has experienced an expansion in the number of democratic or nearly democratic governments. Yet, these same decades also provide numerous examples of polities that, having adopted democratic principles of

governance, then retreated back to illiberal, nondemocratic rule (Przeworski, Alvarez, Cheibub, & Limongi, 2000). There are competing answers as to what makes countries more or less susceptible to adopting particular forms of government. Barington Moore (1966) distinguished between societies that had become democratic from those that had not on the basis of policy choices that promoted or discouraged the commercialization of agriculture and the co-optation of the peasantry into a modern economy. At roughly the same time, A.F.K. Organski (1965) identified stages of political development that were contingent on whether workers and peasants, workers and owners of capital, or peasants and owners of capital coalesced. In his view, the coalitions that formed shaped the economic policies that were subsequently followed by the government in power. For Seymour Martin Lipset (1959), the path to democracy was through economic growth. Growth-oriented policies, according to Lipset, fostered the development of a large middle class that would demand greater control over their economic welfare through the political process. So, for Lipset, economic growth was hypothesized to lead to democracy, whereas for Organski, economic outcomes were shaped, at least in part, by the nature of the government. The evidence for these contending perspectives is mixed and many of their central claims remain, in modified form, central to current debate especially over whether economic conditions determine political outcomes or political choices determine economic outcomes (Glaeser, LaPorta, Lopez de Silanes, & Shleifer, 2004; Jones & Olken, 2005; Przeworski & Limongi, 1997). Others have focused on the emergence of autocratic rule. Wintrobe (1990), Olson (1993), and McGuire and Olson (1996), for instance, examine the entrenchment and routinization of autocratic rule. Their studies tie institutional design to optimal means by which leaders can extract wealth through taxation of their subjects. In Olson's memorable image, roving bandits fail in competition with stationary bandits. The latter choose less confiscatory tax rates so as to maximize long-term gains rather than shortterm extraction. These stationary autocrats provide security for their subjects in exchange for wealth extraction from those same subjects (McGuire & Olson, 1996). Although this literature provides an insightful analysis of the emergence and maintenance of nondemocratic regimes, it generally is not concerned about explaining democratic governance in light of the concept of political survival.

In order to synthesize a framework that would be amenable to the research question at hand, Kadercan (2012:407) incorporates three qualifications. First, following Chiozza and Goemans' (2011) work on the relationship between foreign policy choices and the risk of post-tenure punishment, Kadercan (2012:407-408) assumes that a leader will also be concerned about her post-tenure fate, which is closely associated with the means of exit. As Chiozza and Goemans point out, forceful regime change increases the risk of post-tenure punishment in the form of imprisonment, exile, and death. Accordingly, it can be argued that, while forceful regime change will not be the sole determinant of office-loss and post-tenure punishment, leaders will be highly sensitive to challenges that threaten the stability of their regime. The second qualification follows from the first and involves the assertion that ideologies—or “normative [theories] of action” that explain “prevailing social conditions and provide individuals with guidelines for how to react to them” (Walt 1996:25)—play a very important role in the game of political competition. As Douglass North (1981:53) recognized, all governments need to depend on some ideational element, or an ideology, defined here as a comprehensive set of political, economic, and social views or ideas, particularly concerned with the form and role of government, to legitimize their rule by establishing an abstract relation between the ruler and the ruled. Legitimacy, or “terms by which people recognize, defend, and accept political authority,” is in fact a “necessary component of authority and thus of power” (Bukovansky 2002:2, 70). Accordingly, leaders who are concerned about the relationship between legitimacy and their political survival have strong incentives to obstruct any challenges to the state-sponsored ideology. A third qualification to the political survival approach entails the threats that other states can pose to ruling elites; leaders can lose power and face post-tenure punishment not only as a result of domestic political dynamics, but also as a result of direct or indirect engagement from interstate actors.

This part of the introduction has given a brief historical background of the notion of political survival. The reason for this is to show the underlying reason for the logic of political survival in Turkish politics under AKP rule, the main topic of this study. This thesis tries to establish a cause-effect mechanism for understanding the

AKP's political survival between 2002 and 2018. In doing so, it aims to reveal new explanations for exploring the AKP's political survival.

While trying to explain the survival of the AKP throughout this study, we will concentrate on the perspective of De Mesquita and colleagues unlike the other researches in the literature. One of the most important reasons for this is that, as seen above, there is a separate concept of 'political survival'. The first scholars to design this as a conceptual framework around this notion are Bruce Bueno De Mesquita¹ and Alastair Smith's books, *The Logic of Political Survival* and *The Dictators Handbook*. They examine the theme of domestic political survival in the context of a range of political, economic and foreign policy issues, such as revolution or war, through the application of quantitative methods. De Mesquita and his colleagues draw attention to political survival as a central aim of political leaders and parties. De Mesquita argues that 'the actions that a leader makes and takes constitute how she governs. And what, for a leader, is the 'best' way to govern? The answer to how best to govern: however is necessary first to come to power, then to stay in power, and to control as much national (or corporate) revenue as possible all along the way' (De Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 24).

De Mesquita and Smith show three political dimensions which can 'break' the political landscape: the nominal selectorate; the real selectorate; and the winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 14). According to this theory, on the one hand, if the winning coalition is small and the selectorate is large, the leader has a great chance to control the country with relative ease. This situation is called an autocracy. On the other hand, if the winning coalition and selectorate is large, it provides the least amount of stability to a leader's occupancy of power, a system known as a 'democracy'. This study argues that this theory can be useful to explain the dynamics of the AKP government between 2002 and 2018. As previously mentioned, the AKP government was established with big support from a large coalition, which included liberals and centre-right views. The AKP has taken

¹ Although Bruce Bueno De Mesquita has published many of his research with other academics, Selectorate Theory is mentioned in the literature with him. For this reason De Mesquita's name is used when exploring the selectorate theory throughout this research.

important steps with national reform programmes in many areas in terms of democracy and human rights. As a result, this coalition has survived since 2007. However, as mentioned above, some groups - like the army and the Kemalist bureaucracy - believe that the AKP has a secret agenda for establishing an Islamic state in Turkey. Because of this, the AKP started to fight these opposition groups after 2007 with the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases which will be explained in Chapter 3. This research argues that the AKP's winning coalition started to dwindle due to this conflict in light of the clash between the AKP and some liberals and Western business associations like TUSİAD. As a result, the AKP under Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has become more authoritarian than his conservative democratic position would suggest. After 2011, the support of liberals and centre-right actors decreased due to the AKP's autocracy. The AKP's winning coalition has become smaller than it was in its first years. As a result of this development, the AKP has become more conservative, populist and authoritarian in Turkish political life further.

2.1.1. AKP's Winning Coalition

As discussed above, when the AKP was established in 2001 and won the elections in November 2002, the winning coalition included both domestic and external supporters such as European countries and the United States, liberal intellectuals within the country, moderate Islamist groups like the Fethullah Gülen Movement which mentioned in Introduction, conservative citizens of Turkish society – as their votes significantly influence who is elected – centre-right voters, faith-based non-profit organisations, Western style business institutions like *TÜSİAD* (*Türk Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği*) and conservative business interests among many others (like *MÜSİAD*) when the party first assumed power in 2002 (McDonald, 2011: 525-542). However, this coalition began to shrink after the AKP's second term between 2007 and 2011. Some parts of society like the Western style business sector or secular bureaucratic elites have serious concerns about the AKP's approach towards secularism. Although the conflict between the AKP and the armed forces and secular bureaucratic elites helped to democratize and normalize Turkish politics according to liberal scholars, the second term of the AKP is when it began to

fight opposition groups in illiberal ways (Ugur, 2017: 146-147). Nonetheless, it demonstrates the rise of Islamism, albeit weakly. Indeed, the real breaking point in the AKP's survival was making its minimum winning coalition as small as possible was after the 2011 election. Following the victory of the AKP in the 2011 election, the AKP's conservative democratic identity has severely undermined. The AKP's shift towards more authoritarian and populist marked the end of the long-term alliance between independent, non-party liberal democrats/moderate Islamists/centre-right voters and religious conservatives. Moreover, most of the members of the AKP's winning coalition in 2001 have withdrawn their support for the AKP after Erdoğan's third term. Chapter 4 will explain that, Turkish society divided into two camps after the Gezi Park Protests: Erdoğan's opponents vs. Erdoğan's supporters. This polarization process has evolved into a different dimension for the post-2014 period, and the Kurds and Fethullah Gülen Community, either voluntarily or reluctantly participating in the coalition of the AKP, have joined the AKP's opponents. Along with this war, the AKP's coalition narrowed down and aimed to increase the electorate's mass with instrumentalising of Islamism and nationalism as it explains in the Chapter 5. Before going into these details, it is to be explained in this section what is the concept of Selectorate Theory and how it is applied to the AKP case.

2.1.2. The Concept of Selectorate Theory in Turkish Case

As discussed above, the coalitional politics or political alliance is explained by many scholars and one of the most well-known theories comes from De Mesquita and his colleagues in the form of 'selectorate theory'. This theory is directly related to political survival of political parties or leaders in terms of democracy or authoritarianism. It focuses on leaders' interest in their political survival in their country. Leaders must gain a winning coalition, which is formed by 'selectorate', to control and manage their countries with relative ease. For the authors, the three core issues that affect leaders in politics are: the size of the winning coalition needed, the size of the selectorate that the winning coalition can be drawn from, and the amount of money available to spread around. In small coalition political structures like dictatorships, leaders can stay in power through the judicious use of private rewards

whilst in democratic countries the selectorate is large. Leaders in large coalition polities therefore distribute more public goods - that is, they must actually govern in the public interest, at least to a greater degree, to stay in power (Bueno De Mesquita, et al, 2003).

Following of this book, De Mesquita and Alastair Smith published their well-known work, *The Dictator's Handbook: Why bad behavior is almost good politics*, in 2011. As highlighted before, De Mesquita and Smith show three important dynamics for political survival: the nominal selectorate, the real selectorate, and the winning coalition (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 7-8). The nominal selectorate includes every citizen who has some say in choosing the leader or political party. The real selectorate means those whose support is truly crucial. The most important one, a winning coalition, includes essential supporters whose support translates into a victory for leaders. (Bueno De Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 9).

Bueno de Mesquita and Smith (2011: 19) point out that there are five basic rules leaders can use to succeed in any system. The first two rules are that leaders should keep their winning coalition as small as possible and keep their nominal selectorate as large as possible. A small coalition helps a leader to rely on very few people to stay in power and leaders can easily replace any troublemakers in their coalition due to the large nominal selectorate in this theory. The authors give the examples of North Korea and the early Soviet regime to understand and explain these rules within authoritarian states (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 22). The third rule is to control the flow of revenue. De Mesquita and Smith (2011: 22) argue that the most effective cash flow for leaders is one that make lots of people poor and redistributes money to keep their supporters wealthy. Pakistan's Zardari government is good example of this phenomenon. The fourth rule is that the leaders should pay their supporters just enough to support them. When Mugabe is faced with a threat from military in Zimbabwe, he pays his army to keep his power in the country, for example. The last rule for leaders' political survival in authoritarian states is that they should not take money out of their supporter's pockets to make the peoples' lives better. De Mesquita and Smith (2011: 23) claim that effective policy for the masses

does not necessarily produce loyalty among supporters and is hugely expensive. An example of this is Myanmar's General Thans Shwe, who controlled food relief which he then sold to his military supporters rather than letting it go to the people during the 2008 Nargis cyclone (De Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 23-24).

As noted before, the AKP's history has some similarities in terms of De Mesquita and Smith's political survival rules. The first two rules in particular have been implemented by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan between 2007 and 2014. Indeed, the nominal selectorate for the AKP is every Turkish citizen who chooses the leader of Turkey. As previously mentioned, the AKP government was established with big support from a large coalition, which included liberal and centre-right views. This coalition shows the 'real selectorate' of the AKP. The AKP has taken important steps with national reform programmes in terms of democracy and human rights. The real selectorate's effect is influential for these improvements. As a result, this coalition survived until 2007. The AKP started to fight opposition groups after 2007 and this research claims that the AKP's coalition started to dwindle due to this conflict. After 2011, the support of liberals and centre-right actors decreased due to the AKP's autocracy. The AKP's winning coalition has become smaller it was in the first years of the AKP. Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP government should keep their nominal selectorate as large as possible. Nearly 50% of Turkish citizens voted for the AKP in the 2011 general elections.² They are considered to be the 'nominal selectorate' and choose a leader and political party to govern Turkey. The main result of this phenomenon is the change in Erdoğan's and the AKP's policy after 2011. The ex-members of the AKP'S winning coalition, such as liberals, centre-rights, Kurds, moderate Islamists, etc., regard themselves as 'secular and liberal'. Therefore, Erdoğan was forced to become more conservative, more populist and more authoritarian during the third term of the AKP.

As mentioned above, in the post-2014 period, the winning coalition of the AKP would be even smaller. The conflict between Kurdish forces-the Fethullah Gülen

² The AKP got 10.8 million votes (34.3% of the valid votes) in 2002, 16.3 million in 2007 (46.6% of the valid votes), and approximately 21.4 million (49.8% of the valid votes) in 2011.

Movement and the AKP has intensified since 2014. This situation further narrowed the AKP's winning coalition, but at the same time AKP would have needed more support of the nominal selectorate in the elections. In order to achieve this, a policy that combines Islamism and nationalism under the leadership of Erdogan has been followed for consolidating of nationalist voters in Turkish elections. Chapter 5 also explains how it applies it and the cause-and-effect relationship between AKP's survival and the AKP's Islamist-nationalist political stance in the theoretical context of De Mesquita. Nevertheless, De Mesquita's and his colleagues' approach has experienced various problems in exploring this political phenomenon.

2.1.3. Critics of De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory

There are also some empirical or methodological problems that have been noted. De Mesquita's analysis suffers from omitted variable bias (Clark and Stone, 2008: 387-392). In certain statistical tests and situations (when the omitted variable is correlated with both the dependent variable and one of the independent variables) this can make the results appear stronger than they are. Once this error is corrected, the results are no longer interesting. There have also been problems applying the theory to case studies. For example, when the theory fails to predict different outcomes from different former U.S.S.R member states (Gallagher and Hanson, 2013: 185-214).

According to Kennedy (2009, 695-714), the measure used for operationalizing winning coalition size is inconsistent across regime types. When measures of democracy are entered into the equation, the relationship between winning coalition size and leadership is either substantially weakened or reverses directions. More troubling still, this measure appears to have the opposite effect within the very broad categories of electoral and nonelectoral systems, something that explicitly contradicts the predictions of selectorate theory. Additionally, the effect of selectorate size is substantially weakened in the nonelectoral context, and is only likely to follow the predictions of the theory for leaders that have already had very long tenures. The

effect of the measure of selectorate size, whether the country has an elected legislature, is mostly due to the difference between temporary and institutionalizing military regimes. Legislatures in non-military regimes have a generally destabilizing effect on leadership tenure and this only slowly dissipates with time in office. At the same time, legislatures in military regimes are stabilizing for leaders as they reflect an attempt to institutionalize power. Such a relationship is not predicted by selectorate theory, and indeed the destabilizing effects of military regimes go directly against the predictions of selectorate theory. This raises serious questions about the appropriateness of this measure of selectorate size.

Although selectorate theory was designed to explain politics in authoritarian regimes, its basic constructs (like the selectorate) are not clearly applicable to non-democratic regimes (Gallagher and Hanson; 2015: 367-385). In these countries, formal political institutions don't really structure how politics happens, so a theory based on those institutions doesn't make sense. Gallagher and Hanson also found that the *Logic of Political Survival* suffers from using crude measurements. For example, according to de Mesquita's coding scheme about 80% of all countries have an elected legislature. This includes both the United States as well as countries like Uzbekistan. These measurements are so broad that they are meaningless. Any conclusion drawn from these measurements is (at best) imprecise. They note that;

Although rulers of other countries (North Korea comes to mind) appear to find that a different mix of carrots and sticks ensures their survival, the same calculus is present. By making the size of the winning coalition the critical factor in their model and linking political repression to low levels of public good provision, Bueno de Mesquita et al. predict that all small coalition polities are like North Korea rather than like China, South Korea, Taiwan or Singapore. The analysis in this chapter suggests that a theory of autocratic resilience must go beyond the LPS in permitting rulers to respond to revolutionary threats with different combinations of carrots and sticks. (Gallagher and Hanson, 2013:23)

Indeed, De Mesquita and his colleagues offer a positivist approach within political sciences through their political survival theories based on quantitative methods, especially in their book *The Logic of Political Survival*. Moreover, they claim that control of the whole economy helps to create authoritarian regimes in, for example, African states. This study discusses that this is an American approach against the third world countries and has many problems in terms of colonial or imperial legacies. As mentioned above, the other three rules are related to the economic policy. Although Erdoğan creates his oligarchs who support him as a leader, there is no clear evidence that the Erdoğan government controls the whole economy in Turkey.

Obviously, De Mesquita's theory provides a realist picture and their methods - based on a positivist approach - attempt to explain leader's political survival but does not pay attention to leaders' personal motivations or personal leadership skills. De Mesquita and his colleagues' method is only provided by statistical data and is only valid for the case studies in third world countries which are/were controlled by authoritarian leaders. Bueno de Mesquita's method is grounded on the assumption that people are basically rational beings and everybody is rational like political leaders, according to De Mesquita. Corinne Rockoff criticizes this issue and notes that;

If one assumes that leaders are not solely motivated by the personal desire to stay in power, then a variety of factors could be behind the differences between leaders' choices. These factors could range from the personal, such as issues that leaders have personal attachments to, to the nationally strategic. How do leaders choose which issues they emphasize? Do they focus on longer range planning? Do leaders choose issues in adherence with what they promised during campaigns? It's also possible that leaders shift their focus over time and as they near the end of their terms, they become less willing to conform to political norms that require them to skirt issues they care about. The permutations are endless in any given scenario, and the mathematical constraints of selectorate theory make this question a difficult one to answer (Rockoff, 2014: 4).

Rockoff's criticism specifically examines whether the leader's decisions cannot be explained by rationality and mathematical scenarios. At this point, the influence of AKP leader Erdogan's growing leadership position on the survival of the AKP should not be overlooked. As a response to Rockoff's criticism, Chapter 5 shows why and how the role of Erdogan's leadership is important on the AKP's political survival.

While explaining the survival of the AKP with the De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory, it also introduces some limitations in these criticisms. One of these limitations is related to De Mesquita's case examples. As Gallagher and Hanson (2013) point out, the countries in De Mesquita's samples have very serious differences in terms of the electoral systems or the role of the military. Indeed, Turkey with the AKP case also has different features from other countries. While AKP is ensuring its political survival, it has always aimed to keep the nominal selectorate large in the democratic elections. Although the AKP's winning coalition is getting smaller every period, it has never transformed into a dictatorial states such as North Korea or Zimbabwe due to Turkey's democratic electoral system.

If De Mesquita's theory is correct, the AKP's story would now be very different. As discussed in the last section, the first two rules in De Mesquita's selectorate theory are that leaders should keep their winning coalition as small as possible and keep their nominal selectorate as large as possible. A small coalition helps a leader to rely on very few people to stay in power and leaders can easily replace any threats in their coalition due to the large nominal selectorate in this theory. Indeed, Erdoğan was very successful in preventing these threats like the military's coup attempt and began to make his coalition smaller after 2007. This power struggle has continued after 2011 with the important victory of the AKP in the 2011 Election. At Turkey's general elections on 12 June 2011, the governing AKP won 50% of the overall vote. This was the first time that a ruling party in Turkey has increased its vote in a third term and was vitally important for Erdoğan. In the lead-up to the election, he had indicated that during his first and second terms in power he was an 'apprentice', then

a 'foreman', but a third term would make him a 'master'. Indeed, Erdoğan's style of government would be changed during this third term of AKP.

As noted above, the AKP's winning coalition has become smaller than the first years but it would continue with two important members of Turkish politics - the Fethullah Gülen Movement and some liberal intellectuals. However, this alliance had been concluded after 2012 with the Gezi Park Protests and the 17-25 December corruption scandals. Following the 17-25 December 2013 corruption scandals, Erdoğan declared 'war' against the Gülen Movement and these liberal intellectuals due to their support for corruption claims. Indeed, this conflict may be explained by De Mesquita's selectorate theory because Erdoğan has continued to dissolve the partnership with the AKP's coalition members in order to prevent threats to his political survival. However, the interesting point is the position of the other actors of Turkish politics during these conflicts. First, some of the Kemalist elites who had been eliminated by Erdoğan government during the AKP's second term supported the Erdoğan against the Gülen Movement. Second, Western business associations like TUSIAD, which clashed with the AKP after 2007, supported the AKP against the Gülen Movement due to their economic interests. If De Mesquita's theory is right, Erdoğan does not need the support of these actors and will become like North Korea or the African dictatorships which are mentioned by De Mesquita's theory.

From this point of view, De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory has some limitations or problems when exploring the importance of AKP case in the logic of political survival in Turkish politics. However, this study does not aim to criticise the De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory. Although it has been discussed its limitations or critics in the literature, it is one of the most appropriate concepts that can be used to explore the political survival of the AKP. There are two important reasons to support this argument. The first point is that when the AKP has survived its 16-year rule, it determines the majority of the electorate by sanctifying the concept of 'national will' (milli irade) as the AKP's most significant political objective. At this point, it was the first rule that De Mesquita kept the nominal selectorate large in the selectorate theory

to ensure the survival of political leaders or parties. The AKP government has successfully implemented this rule for 16 years to ensure its survival.

The second point is a series of threats to the political survival of leaders or political parties, as mentioned in De Mesquita's Selectorate theory. Military coups or civil uprisings are the first of these threats. The AKP government was the most exposed political party to these threats against its political survival. In April 2007, the e-military coup attempt, Ergenekon investigation, the Gezi Park protest in 2013 and the July 15 coup attempt was some of the examples of these threats. Another reason for focusing on De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory while examining the AKP's political survival is the relation between political survival and those threats. For these reasons, the fact that the 16 years of political success of the AKP is not explored in the literature through political survival further increases the importance of De Mesquita's theory for the AKP case.

3. Research Methodology

Researchers choose two main research data methods when they want to explain and improve their hypothesis: qualitative and quantitative. On the one hand, qualitative data collection methods result in descriptions of problems, behaviours or events and can provide narrative descriptions of people's thoughts and opinions about their experiences, attitudes, and beliefs. On the other hand, quantitative data collection methods consist of counts or frequencies, rates or per centages, or other statistics that document the actual existence or absence of problems, behaviours, or occurrences. This data can yield representative and generalisable information.

This research uses qualitative methods for three reasons. First, qualitative methods provide the 'case studies' that illustrate the nature of the problem addressed. This study explores a case study about the logic of political survival Turkish politics during the Justice and Development Party (AKP) government. Second, the main research question of this study concerns questions of 'why' and 'how', so qualitative data methods capture more depth and provide insights as to the 'why' and 'how' of attitudes and behaviours. Lastly, this research depends on specific cases about Turkey and the AKP government and case study analysis is one of the most useful qualitative methods in this study.

3.1. Case-study Analysis

Qualitative methods can include different types of approaches, such as case studies, elite interviews, critical discourse analysis and so on. This study offers a case study research in light of the AKP case for understanding the logic of political survival in Turkish politics.

Case study research may be said to begin with J. S. Mill's magisterial study, 'A System of Logic', first published in 1843. In the early twentieth century, case study

research was influenced by logicians such as Cohen and Nagel (1934) and was the subject of intense discussion among sociologists such as Carl Becker (1934), Ernest Burgess (1927, 1928, 1941), Charles Cooley (1927), Leonard Cottrell (1941), Paul Foreman (1948), Katharine Jocher (1928), Robert Park (1930), Clifford Shaw (1927), and Samuel Stouffer (1931, 1941, 1950). In the 1960s and 1970s, another wave of research attempted to define, improve, and integrate case study methods into the mainstream of social science methods. Influential studies include Campbell (1966, 1975), Eckstein (1975), George (1979), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Lijphart (1971, 1975), Przeworski and Teune (1970), and Skocpol and Somers (1980). Today, the literature on case study methods is so abundant and diverse that it defies description—which may be a testament to either its success or its failure, depending on your point of view.

As discussed above, it is not easy to describe what a case study is because there is no easy explanation (Solberg Søylen & Huber, 2006,). A case study can be defined as an intensive study about a person, a group of people or a unit, which is aimed to generalize over several units. In a case study the focus is based on a specially unit (Jacobsen, 2002). Another, similar, definition is that a case study is an analyse of systems that are studied with a comprehensive view by either one or several methods (Thomas, 2011). The case study method is not aimed to analyse cases, but it is a good way to define cases and to explore a setting in order to understand it (Cousin, 2005). “The case study method “explores a real-life, contemporary bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information... and reports a case description and case themes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 97).

In a case study, one or more cases can be investigated. When examining one case, we refer to a singular case study, and a multiple or plural case study is used to describe a study examining several cases. In multiple case studies, each case is studied as if it is a singular study and is then compared to other cases. The analysis of each following case is built on the knowledge obtained in the analysis of previous

cases (Mesec 1998, p. 384). For singular and multiple case studies, Thomas suggests an additional classification, according to the type of time dimension.

The types of singular case studies, regarding time dimension, are as follows (Thomas 2011, p. 517):

- i. **Retrospective case studies:** The simplest type of study; it involves the collection of data relating to a past phenomenon of any kind. The researcher is looking back on a phenomenon, situation, person, or event and studying it in its historical integrity.
- ii. **Snapshot studies:** The case is being examined in one particular period of time, such as a current event, a day in the life of a person, a diary, etc. Whether a month, a week, a day, or even a period as short as an hour, the analysis is aided by the temporal juxtaposition of events. As the snapshot develops, the picture presents itself as a Gestalt over a tight timeframe.
- iii. **Diachronic studies:** Change over time and are similar to longitudinal studies.

This research offers a single and retrospective case study in light of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. Single case study analysis has some advantages and disadvantages. Benefits with a single case study are that they are not as expensive and time-consuming as multiple case studies. Single case studies are better when the writer wants to create a high-quality theory because this type produces extra and better theory. A single case study also makes the writer to have a deeper understanding of the exploring subject. Other benefits are that single case studies richly can describe the existence of phenomenon and it is better to make a single case study than a multiple case study when the writer wants to study, for

example, a person or a group of people. When a single case study is used the writer also can question old theoretical relationships and explore new ones. This is because a more careful study is made. George and Bennett (2005) conclude that these strengths lie in four categories:

“Case studies are generally strong precisely where statistical methods and formal models are weak. We identify four strong advantages of case methods that make them valuable in testing hypotheses and particularly useful for theory development: their potential for achieving high conceptual validity; their strong procedures for fostering new hypotheses; their value as a useful means to closely examine the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of individual cases; and their capacity for addressing causal complexity”. (George and Bennett 2005:19)

However, some scholars have demonstrated the disadvantages and problems of case study analysis. Some social scientists believe that case study analysis can be the weakest test method for observations compared to other methods like experimentation or large-n analysis (Van Evera, 1997). According to this view, case study analysis has some difficulties in controlling the effect of omitted or third variables. Large-n analysis allows better control for these variables. Van Evera (1997) shows that; a second main criticism is that a case study cannot be generalised to other cases. This criticism can be a problem for my research because a single case has many difficulties in examining and identifying the hypotheses of other cases. Gerring has identified a paradox in which he correctly states that a case study exists in a strange, curious methodological limbo, which, he believes, is due to a lack of understanding of this method (Gerring 2004, p. 341). Flyvbjerg has therefore sought to resolve this paradox and, in so doing, to achieve a wider acceptance and application of research using case studies. He has identified five misunderstandings about case studies that undermine the credibility and application of this research type. These misunderstandings refer primarily to the theory, reliability, and validity (Flyvbjerg 2006; 2011):

- i. General, theoretical (context-independent) knowledge is more valuable than concrete, practical (context-dependent) knowledge.
- ii. It is impossible to generalize on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case study cannot contribute to scientific development.
- iii. The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses (that is, in the first stage of a total research process), whereas other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.
- iv. Case studies contain a bias toward verification; that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.
- v. It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.

Since case studies not develop testable generalizations, they are often criticized in not to be enough scientific according to Encyclopedia Britannica, II (1979). Yin (2009) writes that during the design of the case study, the structure should be identified. To identify the structure and to extenuate the criticism the writer should have a thoughtful research design and a precise language through the report according to Eisenhardt & Graebner (2007). Another thing to take under consideration is that tables and figures make the case more reliable because of the rich presentation of evidence. If the case study also contains appendixes with extra information or/and theoretical sampling of the case or cases the case study become more dependable according to Eisenhardt & Graebner. One of the most important limitations of this study is the problem of generalization over the AKP case in the logic of political survival in Turkish politics. At this point, as Eisenhardt & Graebner stated, we used tables and figures throughout the study and at the same time gave extra information with elite interviews to make the case study more dependable.

3.1.1. Case Study and Causal Mechanism

Causation (also referred to as causality) is the relation between cause and effect. A cause is why something happens and the effect is what happens. Causation shows the connection between causes and effects generally. The understanding of causation has become one of the big philosophical issues between philosophers who have discussed it for centuries (Mumford, 2012: 44-45). David Hume was one of the most important philosophers in these discussions and played a prominent role in shaping the philosophical debate about causation (Ayer, 2000: 67).

Some general thoughts about causation persevere, like the idea that causes necessitate their effects or causes have the power to bring about their effects. David Hume criticised these beliefs in terms of the relationship between cause and effect. Hume thought that causal connections were unobservable and people could not know the causal connection between the first event and the second event in all cases (Hume, 1995: 29-36). Mumford gives an example of this:

We can see one event, such as someone taking a pill, and a second event when they get better, but we never see causal connection between two events... The problem is deeper than merely that, I cannot see inside someone's body. Even in the simplest case, Hume alleges that we can never see the causal connection (Mumford, 2012, p.46).

Indeed, Hume does not argue that the relationship between causes and effects could not be generalised. Ayer argues that "Hume is concerned with causality as the ground of factual inference; it has to supply the bridge which carries us safely from a true belief in one matter of fact to a true belief in another" (Ayer, 2000: 69). The main problem for Hume is the necessary connection between causes and effects in all cases. Hume claims that there is no necessary connection between cause and effect if the relations are between external objects and the power of the will over the body or mind (Honore, 2014). Hume asserts the importance of causal inference rather than general theories of causation in order to understand the relationship between cause and effect. According to Hume, causal inference is defined as the discovery of causal relations rather than a consequence of them (Garrett, 2009: 73-

92). Hume also points out that the nature of relation depends so much on that of the inference that he is obliged to advance in this seemingly preposterous manner of examining causal inference before explaining the nature of causal relation (Hume 1995: 29-36).

Case studies examine the operation of causal mechanisms in individual cases in detail. Within a single case, we can look at a large number of intervening variables and inductively observe any unexpected aspects of the operation of a particular causal mechanism or help identify what conditions present in a case activate the causal mechanism. Firstly, how the causal mechanism will be defined and what it will mean in this work will be examined.

The first difficulty with the current vogue of mechanism-centred causal analysis is establishing how it is defined. Gerring (2010: 1500-1501) demonstrates that 'causal mechanism' may refer to: (a) the pathway or process by which an effect is produced; (b) a micro-level (microfoundational) explanation for a causal phenomenon; (c) a difficult-to-observe causal factor; (d) an easy-to-observe causal factor; (e) a context dependent (tightly bounded or middle-range) explanation; (f) a universal (i.e. highly general) explanation; (g) an explanation that presumes probabilistic, and perhaps highly contingent, causal relations; (h) an explanation built on phenomena that exhibit law-like regularities; (i) a technique of analysis based on qualitative or case study evidence; and/or (j) a theory couched in formal mathematical models (Gerring, 2008; also see Hedstrom, 2005: 25; Mahoney, 2003; Mayntz, 2004; Norkus, 2004).

Clearly many scholars try to identify causal mechanisms in many ways. However, these differences do not affect the importance of causal mechanisms for this research. As mentioned before, the causal mechanisms between independent and dependent variables in the research play the most important role in this study. Causal mechanisms can be defined as 'a complex system, which produces an outcome by the interaction of a number of parts' (Glennan, 1996: 52). Studying causal mechanisms in qualitative, in-depth, single case studies enables the

researcher to make strong within-case inferences about how outcomes come about, thus updating the level of confidence we have in the validity of theorised causal mechanisms (Gerring, 2004: 341-354).

This research chooses Mahoney's classification to explain causal mechanisms rather than these explanations. According to Mahoney, causal mechanisms refer to three different explanations; (1) something that intervenes between a cause and outcome; (2) the specific defining aspects of the causal factor that affect the outcome; or (3) a potentially invariant general property or process (Mahoney, 2015: 206). This research does not offer a simple causal inference or causal mechanism to explain the logic of political survival in Turkish politics in light of the AKP case. In regular causal analysis, X is the direct cause of Y or Y is the direct cause of X. This study does not argue that the independent variables are the direct cause of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. It provides a causal mechanism (a series of intervening variables) between the independent variables (cause = the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism- AKP's power struggle- the beginning of populist authoritarianism under AKP rule- the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership) and dependent variable (outcome = AKP's political survival in Turkish politics). Mahoney explores the understanding of causal mechanism below:

I treat mechanisms in the same way as causes and outcomes; they are particular events or specific values on variables. Mechanisms are different from causes and outcomes because of their temporal position: they stand between a cause and outcome in time. Thus, in the expression $X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$, the letters refer to events or specific values on variables, with X being treated as the cause, M as the mechanism, and Y as the outcome (Mahoney, 2015: 206).

The other important point for the causal inference and case study methods is collecting and evaluating evidences or data. Careful design of a case study is therefore very important. This is because case study method, through interviews or journal entries, must be able to prove that:

- i. it is the only viable method to elicit implicit and explicit data from the subjects
- ii. it is appropriate to the research question
- iii. it follows the set of procedures with proper application
- iv. the scientific conventions used in social sciences are strictly followed
- v. a 'chain of evidence', either quantitatively or qualitatively, are systematically
- vi. recorded and archived particularly when interviews and direct observation by the researcher are the main sources of data
- vii. the case study is linked to a theoretical framework (Tellis, 1997)

As seen this perspective, the case study method needs sufficient evidence to prove its hypothesis. This study offers elite interviewing methods to collect sufficient evidences to make a causal mechanism between dependent and independent variables.

3.1.2. Case Study and Elite Interviewing

Before explaining the relationship between the case study analysis and elite interviews, this research will to define 'elite interviewing', regarding it as a research technique with particular relevance to politics. Increasingly, numbers of political analysts use and recognize elite interviewing as an important research method in modern political science to collect information and knowledge. Elite interviews offer political scientists a rich, cost-effective method for producing data to analyse the complexities of politics (Beamer, 2002: 86).

In recent years, a small but growing body of research has documented the issues and dynamics associated with interviewing 'elite' participants in qualitative research (e.g. Duke, 2002; Harvey, 2011; Hertz & Imber, 1995; Mikecz, 2012; Morris, 2009; Neal & McLaughlin, 2009; Smith, 2006; Stephens, 2007; Welch, Marschan-

Piekkari, Penttinen, & Tahvanainen, 2002). The term 'elite' is not always defined within this literature, but is generally used to describe individuals or groups who ostensibly have closer proximity to power or particular professional expertise (Morris, 2009). A variety of challenges associated with researching elites have been documented in the literature, ranging from difficulties with gaining access to the suggestion that elite participants may seek to exert too much control over research and manipulate dissemination processes (for discussion see Smith, 2006; Welch et al., 2002). In the context of policy research more specifically, it has been suggested that additional issues must be considered when the 'elite' participants in question also interact and operate within policy networks (Duke, 2002; Farquharson, 2005).

Beamer (2002) and Dexter (1970) argue that elite interviews target people directly involved in the political process. Individuals may have special insights into the causal mechanisms or processes of politics and elite interviews offer an in-depth exploration of specific political matters. The resulting information or knowledge explains not just the potential for a richer description of political processes, but also for more efficient and valid data for inferential purposes. Elite interviews should be an important part of the research for an answer to a main research question. According to Beamer, elite interview research design should be systematically developed and executed in four basic steps: 1) identify the constructs of interest and develop observable measures and instrumentation to tap into them; 2) develop sampling procedures to maximize the validity of the study; 3) conduct interviews and collect corroborative data; 4) analyze data (Beamer, 2002: 87).

As said before, some scholars, like George and Bennett (2005: 223), argue that elite interviewing methods are relevant for case study research. Another of these scholars, Oisin Tansey, explains the importance of elite interviewing as a means of collecting the kind of data necessary and explores the specific advantages elite interviewing. Tansey offers four important uses of elite interviews and when using this data collection technique to uncover causal processes (Tansey, 2007: 5).

There are four important aims of elite interviews in Tansey's articles. This study tries to adopt these goals into the research because this study offers elite interviewing methods to examine the logic of political survival in Turkish politics under the AKP government. First, elite interviewing methods can be used to support the early findings which come from documents or secondary sources about the overview of events or issues. This research uses the archival or legal documents of the AKP government such as party programmes or election guides, laws and constitutional changes, and important news or events about the AKP's political survival. All of these documents have been corroborated by interviews with key players like policy makers or academics in Turkey to explore the AKP's political survival. Second, elite interviews aim to establish what a group of people think. This research was carried out through interviews with policy makers and politicians from the AKP or other political parties and it helps to establish what people think and what their attitudes, values and beliefs are. Tansey (2007: 7-8) points out that researchers can thus gather rich detail about the thoughts of key policy makers concerning the central and important matters of this research project.

Third, elite interviews make inferences about the larger population's characteristics or decisions. According to Tansey, interviews with key political groups can be used to generalise the larger population's thoughts or decisions. For instance, this research has conducted interviews with members or policy makers from all of Turkey's key political parties and these findings can be generalised to the wider population of other political party members or voters of these political parties. As Tansey notes: 'characteristics, traits and actions found through the sample group were inferred to exist also in the population from which the sample was drawn and general conclusions were made concerning the wider political elite' (Tansey, 2007: 7).

Lastly, elite interviews help rebuild an event or set of events. Elite interviewing methods show the hidden elements of the political process that are not clear from the analysis of political outcomes or from other sources. This study needs to clarify the independent and intervening variables of the AKP's political survival.

The fieldwork for this research included around 70 interviews with politicians, academics and student groups. The present research has involved interviews held with direct participants in the process of AKP's power in Turkey for 15 years. For example, the gradual legitimisation of the AKP's founding philosophy and its overall conservatism has been examined on the basis of interviews with the AKP's founding staff, such as Abdüllatif Şener. In the second period of the AKP, the Kemalist elite struggle and its consolidation of power are illuminated through interviews with journalists (such as Işık Kansu and Melih Aşık) and politicians (such as Mustafa Balbay), who were either convicted in the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* (Sladagehammer) cases or who were members of the Kemalist elite. This research also posed some general questions to the interviewees as below:

- 1) How do you identify the AKP? Is it a Muslim-democratic party or is it a continuation of the *Milli Görüş* movement/pro-Islamic party?
- 2) What do you think about the establishment process of the AKP? Was there a deviation from the party programme afterwards? Was the implementation in line with your expectations?
- 3) Particularly after 9/11, there was what you call a demand for the "moderate Muslim democracy" label. For several years Turkey was an important example of this demand with the concept of 'conservative democracy'. Why did this happen? Did the AKP succeed in this demand?
- 4) The idea that the AKP was "pro-Islamist" became widespread throughout the 2000s. Many people thought of it as a technocratic party that was only interested in modernizing Turkey's economy with regards to neo-liberalism, rather than pursuing a religious-Islamic agenda. Did this perception take root?
- 5) How would you evaluate the AKP's changing rhetoric in recent years in terms of Turkish domestic and foreign policy issues?
- 6) It has been often said that the AKP and its leader Erdoğan have a hidden agenda. Which laws or regulations approved by the AKP government or which speech by Erdoğan shows the rise of Islamism in Turkey?

- 7) Has there been a rift between secularists and Islamists in Turkey during the AKP's second and last term or are most of the conflicts in Turkey related to the country's democratic deficit in light of the Erdoğan's political discourse?³

The case studies necessarily involved small sampling frames, given their specific focus on particular policy development processes. Individuals were invited to participate due to their key roles or involvement in these processes. Researchers can gain evidence about political debates that preceded decision making and supplement official accounts with first-hand testimony. Such interviews can allow the researcher to collect first-hand testimony from direct participants and witnesses regarding critical events and processes and provide the researcher with a means to probe beyond official accounts and narratives and ask theoretically-guided questions about issues that are highly specific to the researcher's objectives (Beach and Pedersen, 2012: 134). The meaning of 'first-hand testimony', which Beach and Pedersen emphasize, also plays an important role in the field research of this project. The vast majority of interviewees were politicians who were involved in Islamist movements like *Milli Görüş* or who were directly or indirectly affected by the rise of Islamism in Turkish politics. This research collected the first-hand memories of these significant players in Turkish politics to explore the variables of this research.

Van Evera (1997) points out that there are three basic ways to test theories and hypotheses in researches: experimentation, observation using a large-n analysis and observing using a case study analysis. Case studies have powerful advantages in the heuristic identification of new variables and hypotheses through the study of deviant or outlier cases and in the course of field work—such as archival research and interviews with participants, area experts, and historians. When a case study researcher asks a participant “were you thinking X when you did Y,” and gets the answer, “No, I was thinking Z,” then if the researcher had not thought of Z as a causally relevant variable, she may have a new variable demanding to be heard. The popular refrain that observations are theory-laden does not mean that they are

³ These interviews have been made in Ankara between October 2015-December 2015

theory-determined. If we ask one question of individuals or documents but get an entirely different answer, we may move to develop new theories that can be tested through previously unexamined evidence. The variables of this research use to explain the political survival of the AKP also benefit from these strong advantages of the case study method. For example, at the point where the AKP has successfully survived for 16 years, reasons of AKP's political survival are being conducted through Şerif Mardin's center-periphery analysis or Cihan Tugal's passive revolution theories. However, as a result of the interviews conducted during the study, it is determined that AKP ensures its political survival by using different variables in four different AKP's terms between 2002 and 2018. New hypotheses on the AKP's political survival are explored in this study in light of the case study analysis and elite interviews.

Elite interviews have some other advantages in light of this research's methodological puzzle. Elite interviews can help in interpreting documents, or reports, particular if you gain access to the authors responsible for putting together a relevant document or report. They can help in interpreting the personalities involved in the relevant decisions and help explain the outcome of events. They can provide information not recorded elsewhere, or not yet available (if ever) for public release. According to Beach and Pedersen (2012: 134-135), elite interviews provide the opportunity to interview the persons who actually participated in the process. The important question is, 'what was the interviewee's role' in the process? This question accounts for a more direct measure of a causal mechanism, depending on how the theoretical test has been operationalized (Beach and Pedersen, 2012: 134). As discussed above, this research chooses the interviewees who actually participated in the Turkish politics during the AKP period between 2002 and 2017. This study tests the orthodox explanations and shows why these explanations are not sufficient to understand and explore the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. In addition, data from interviewees helps to reveal new alternative explanations and tests the dependent variables and intervening variables of this research.

On the other hand, elite interviewing is certainly not a precise skill and there are a number of methodological, operational and interpretational problems involved.

Although unrepresentative sampling is not often an issue in elite interviewing, where it is so, it may be due to problems of access. Sometimes, it is simply not possible to obtain a representative sample, because certain individuals or categories of individuals (possibly those with something to lose from being interviewed), refuse a request for an interview. Where this is the case, the political scientist must acknowledge this fact.

This problem was another important limitation when elite interviews were carried out. AKP politicians totally rejected the rise of authoritarianism-populism or Islamism under AKP rule and they refused to give an interview for this reason, while this research is aiming to establish a cause-effect relationship between the AKP's political survival and the rise of authoritarianism-populism or Islamism. In order to reduce the impact of this problem, interviews were made with the former AKP members, who took part as policymakers at certain periods from the establishment of the AKP until the last period of AKP. For example, while the establishment of the AKP is being analysed by Abdüllatif Şener, one of the founders of the AKP. AKP's power struggle process between 2007 and 2011 was examined by Suat Kınıklıoğlu, one of the AKP's vice presidents during this period. Moreover, interviews were conducted with other Islamist or conservative Kurdish politicians or liberal academics that supported the AKP in various time periods until 2015, the end of their support to the AKP government.

The reliability of the interviewee is sometimes questionable. This often results from failures in his or her memory. The older the witness, and the further from events they are, the less reliable the information (though the more willing they may be to talk). This is partly a result of the stretch of time, but interviewees also have the problem of confusing what they can actually remember of events, with what they have later read on the same subject. They may also adjust their interpretation of an event in order to avoid being seen in a poor light or, in some cases, they may have an axe to grind. Thus, the interviewer must constantly be aware that the information the interviewee is supplying, can often be of a highly subjective nature. In the extreme, an interviewee may deliberately set out to mislead or falsify an issue or

event. Some groups prove to be far more reliable than others. Evidence suggests that the least satisfactory group are [ex] politicians who: 'often encounter pathological difficulties in distinguishing the truth, so set have their minds become by long experience of partisan thought' (Seldon, 1988: 10).

The disadvantage of the elite interview was one of the limitations of this study. In particular, the politicians' own partisan and subjective perspectives have created various difficulties in exploring the study's research questions. Two student groups were added to the interview participants to reduce the effect of this problem. These students came from the department of political science or other similar fields and their testimonies about the AKP period are both more recent and provide much reliable data at the point of objectivity of this research. As a result of these critics and limitations, it is not possible, though, for the elite interview alone to explain everything. Beach and Pedersen indicate this issue when they note:

As a consequence of the imperfections of human memory, interviews will never be a perfectly reliable measuring instrument. Reliability can, however, be improved through the careful use of triangulation both across different persons and between different kinds of sources (interviews, archival observations, and so forth) (Beach and Pedersen, 2012: 135).

In the present research, party documents, legal regulations, archival documents, public speeches and other written texts are used in conjunction with interviews in order to uncover the operative causal mechanism and to identify the intervening variables. Overall, case study method requires the collection of data concerning key political decision-making and activity, often at the highest political level, and elite interviews will frequently be a critical strategy for obtaining this required information. While their corroborative function should not be under-played, it is the additive role of elite interviews that is most relevant when considering their use in association with case study analysis.

3.1.3. Intervening Variables in Causal Mechanism

Elite interviews are tools used to study causal mechanisms in a single-case research design. As mentioned above, the causal mechanism is crucial to understanding the relational integrity between dependent and independent variables. In some research, however, the cause and effect relationship between independent and dependent variables is not obvious without the discovery of a hypothetical intervening variable (King, Koheana and Verba, 1994). An intervening variable is something that impacts or mediates the relationship between independent and dependent variables. The causal mechanism, in turn, defines a series of intervening variables. King, Kohena and Verba explain the role of intervening variables in causal mechanisms below:

Hence, our definition of causality is logically prior to the identification of causal mechanisms. Furthermore, there always exists in the social sciences an infinity of causal steps between any two links in the chain of causal mechanisms. If we posit that an explanatory variable causes, a 'causal mechanisms' approach would require us to identify a list of causal links between the two variables. This definition would also require us to identify a series of causal linkages, to define causality for each pair of consecutive (intervening) variables in the sequence, and to identify the linkages between any two of these variables and the connections between each pair of variables. This approach quickly leads to infinite regress, and at no time does it alone give a precise definition of causality for any one cause and one effect (King, Kohena and Verba, 1994: 86).

The intervening variables this study has tried to examine are frequently used in the social sciences, particularly political science. In the study of religion and politics, which is the main topic of this research, the concept of the intermediate variable is used in explaining cause and effect relations. This phenomenon can be examined through case studies, as Masdar Hilmy has done in his book *Islamism and Democracy in Indonesia: Piety and Pragmatism*. Hilmy's work aims to explore the

causal mechanism between a liberal state and democratisation in the case of Indonesia. Hilmy claims that;

It is in such a delicate interaction between the state and society that Islam has come to be a significant intervening variable in this long and strenuous process. It seems to be confident that the process of democratisation in Indonesia will take a different shape from that in most of the Western democratic countries, where there is a firm separation of church and state.... In other words, Indonesia's democracy will be characterized by the integrality of religion and public life (Hilmy, 2010, pp.67-68).

Hilmy (2010: 67) views Islam as the intervening variable to explore the relations between independent and dependent variables. He argues that Indonesia's democratisation is inseparable from Islam's involvement as a predominant cultural force.

The other case comes from Lawrence Rubin's work *Islam in the Balance: Ideational Threats in Arab Politics*. This research's independent variable is Islamist regimes while its dependent variable is state policy. Rubin claims that the cause-effect relationship between these two variables is explored by using intervening variables as 'threat perception'. He points out that;

These dyads as a whole exhibit both within-case and cross-case variation to test alternative hypotheses and explore interesting theoretical and empirical puzzles. The within case studies focus on the changes in threat perception (intervening variable) and state policy (dependent variable) before and after Islamist regime (independent variable) comes to power... Policies and statements as indicators of threat should therefore be consistent with a change in threat perception (Rubin, 2014: 15).

Rubin's methods for demonstrating the role of intervening variables in the research are very similar to those used in this study. Rubin uses the elite interviewing method and archival observation to explore the cause-effect relationship by utilizing intervening variables. The sources of data are interviews with current and former government officials, academics, and other local analysts, as well as reports in the local Arabic press and media (Rubin, 2014: 15-16).

Apart from these studies, other studies conceptualize intervening variables in the field of religion and politics in international studies. Other similar examples can be given in the literature on Turkish politics. For instance, Murat Somer focuses on the cause-effect relationship between political Islam and democratisation in Turkey and Tunisia in his research's intervening variables which are the main Turkish and Tunisian political actors, the AKP and Ennahda respectively. Somer indicates this phenomenon below:

What explains this discrepancy between theoretical expectations and actual performance and what does all this say about the way we should conceptualize and theorize the relationship between political Islamism and democratisation? This article develops the thesis that Turkish and Tunisian Islamists seem to share a characteristic, which appears to be a key intervening variable undermining or reversing the democratic potentials of political Islamic actors. At least partially in response to their countries' respective histories and processes of pro-secular nation-state building, these actors seem to have developed a prerogative, which may be described as "preoccupation with conquering the state as opposed to democratizing it" (Somer, 2016: 2).

The other key example is Çiğdem Kentmen's research on Turkey's EU accession. Kentmen's research shows the indicators and important factors of support for Turkey's EU accession which is her dependent variable. Kentmen (2008: 495-497) identifies independent variables in her empirical analysis in three categories: "Attachment to Islam, Utilitarian Considerations and National Identity". The first category - attachment to Islam - is important to test whether there is support for

Turkey's EU membership in spite of the rise of political Islam. The cause-effect relationship between political Islam and support for EU membership is explained by some intervening variables in Kentmen's research. Kentmen (2008: 497) claims her research included the respondent's age, gender, education level and income level. The years in which the surveys took place are intervening variables because earlier studies have shown them to be related to the dependent and independent variables used in this study.

3.1.4. The Intervening Variables of This Research

In this research, the cause and effect relationship between the independent variables such as; the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism, AKP's power struggle, the beginning of AKP's populism and authoritarianism, the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership and dependent variable; the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics is not obvious without using the intervening variables to clarify the causal mechanism. As discussed above, the present study examines the AKP in four periods, employing in this research intervening variables to explain the relationship between the dependent variables and AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. In the AKP's first period, the focus is on the legitimisation of the AKP's conservative identity in the context of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. As the continuation of *Milli Görüş*, the AKP is not radical Islamist and has not functioned as a centre-right party. Nonetheless, legitimising of the AKP's conservative identity under the banner of 'conservative democracy' constituted a preparatory factor in the AKP's survival, because the AKP could not give up its conservative identity due to electoral pressure from conservative voters. In the present study, legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism is described as a first independent variable. Relevant intervening variables include external/internal actors supporting the AKP, the military process of 28 February, and the concept of conservative democracy. On the one hand, these variables occurred because of the survival of the AKP; on the other hand, these variables protected the AKP's conservative identity and structure.

Following the 2007 elections, the AKP faced two important threats to its survival: the attempted 2007 e-Military coup and the AKP's Closure Trial. Both of these attempts had been instigated by Kemalist secular elites, with the power struggle between the AKP and Kemalist elites being the direct result. The present research defines this as the period of the AKP's power struggle and it shows this struggle process to be an independent variable that explains the cause of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. The AKP's reaction to these attempts reduced the importance of the secular elites in Turkish politics, as well as in other institutions like judiciary or military bureaucracy. Perhaps the best-known examples of these reactions are the *Ergenekon*/Sledgehammer (*Balyoz*) investigations and the 2010 constitutional amendment referendum. Both of these movements may be considered intervening variables under the 'AKPs power struggle' variable. These variables, rooted in the survival of the AKP, are among the indicators of the AKP's power struggle which is the second independent variable of the present research.

The beginning of authoritarianism and populism has been experienced since the third period of the AKP (2011-2014). One of the most important factors contributing to the survival of leaders or parties has been to keep the nominal selectorate (voters) as large as possible. During its second and third periods, the AKP broke that broad voting coalition on the basis of its founding philosophy and eliminated its partners one by one. The distinguishing feature of these coalition partners is that they defined themselves as specifically secular. As the tension with the secularists grew from 2007, the AKP had to assume a more conservative identity in order to keep the nominal selectorate wide. This forced the AKP to produce a polarizing strategy over the Kemalists and secularists, and this strategy was realised via populist and authoritarian policies such as anti-intellectualism or anti-Kemalism. This strategy is identified as a dependent variable of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics, especially after 2011. The populist policy mechanisms like anti-intellectualism, anti-Kemalism or lower class mythology can be identified as intervening variables between AKP's populism and AKP's political survival.

As discussed in Chapter 4, the AKP's claims to Black Turk identity were initially used as part of 'soft' populist discourse to articulate demands of conservative Muslims for democratic inclusion in the mainstream of Turkish society, economy and politics. As these demands lost their urgency and relevance, and as the AKP started to falter in maintaining its political and ideological hegemony, references to White and Black Turks became part of a hardening nativist, populist discourse. The reconfigured discourse on White and Black Turks is now used in the making and legitimising of a majoritarian and authoritarian populism, claiming to represent the 'native and the national' (*yerli ve milli*) against those seen as the inauthentic, foreign elements in the body politic.

This 'native and national' policy approach helps the AKP to instrumentalise Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership in the post-2014 period for keeping the large nominal selectorate in the elections. This instrumentalisation is also addressed in this study as the last independent variable for explaining the survival of the AKP. There will be intervening variables such as; the conflict with the Kurdish forces, the 2015 elections, the fight against the Fethullah Gülen movement and 15th July coup attempt to be used for examining the causal mechanism between the instrumentalisation of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership and AKP's political survival in the post-2014 period.

4. Conclusion

The research methodology and literature review of this research are examined in Chapter 1. First, the literature of political survival in world and Turkish politics has been explored.

In the next section, case study analysis and elite interview methods were examined in depth, explaining how these methods are combined in this study. Case study analysis requires the collection of data concerning key political decision-making

and activity, often at the highest political level, and elite interviews will frequently be a critical strategy for obtaining the required evidence for this research. Interviews with a large number of politicians and academics and documentary sources explain the AKP in four separate periods within four independent variables for understanding the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2002 and 2018.

Finally, this chapter focuses on De Mesquita's selectorate theory, which was foregrounded as a conceptual bridge for establishing a causal mechanism between these variables. Following in this chapter, Chapter 2 will examine in detail the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism, the first independent variable that describes the cause of AKP's political survival between 2002 and 2007.

Chapter 2: First term of AKP (2002-2007): The Legitimisation of the AKP's Conservatism in Turkish Politics

1. Introduction

Chapter 1 discusses theoretically how the logic of political survival was studied in the literature. Later on, the logic of political survival was examined in a way that was applied methodically to Turkish politics and AKP case. In this direction, AKP period was divided into 4 different periods and 4 independent variables were expressed in these 4 periods by establishing a causal mechanism with the political survival of AKP which is the dependent variable of this study. In Chapter 2, the first dependent variable, 'the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism', will explore the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival between 2002 and 2007. The first important point here is that the Milli Görüş (National Vision) movement, which constitutes the founding members of the AKP, has failed to protect its political survival and that the AKP, which has been lecturing on these failures, has tried to legitimise itself in order to preserve political survival in Turkish politics.

As a result of the democratic multi-party system, most of Turkey's political parties had Islamic themes and views in their party programmes. However, only one of them, the Nation Party (*Millet Partisi*) had a single seat in the Grand National Assembly after the 1950 Election (Zürcher, 2003: 244). The Nation Party was both a conservative and nationalistic political party and it claimed to bring Turkey to true secularism and prevent a slide to atheism and Communism (Buğra, 2002).

As mentioned before, the tension between secularists and Islamists had been increased due to the authoritarian secularism under Mustafa Kemal's rule and the state's control of religion. When the DP was established in 1946, the founders of the DP had supported the reformation of Islam and secularism in their party programmes up until the 1950 election (Ahmad, 1988: 756). The DP criticised the RPP's

authoritarian approach to Islam while its liberal attitudes to Islam encouraged Islamic voters (Toprak, 2005). Nevertheless, the end of militant secularism did not mean the triumph of the Islamists. The party which had total confidence of the Islamist press, the Nation (Millet) Party, was an electoral flop and was no threat to the Democrat Party. Nevertheless, throughout the 1950s, this liberal attitude towards Islam encouraged an Islamic reassertion which was essentially cultural in nature (Ahmad, 1991: 10). Overall, the DP's victory did not depend on only Islamic voters' pressure and the RPP's anti-democrat and illiberal approach played a prominent role in the DP's victory in the 1950 election (Zürcher, 2003: 227).

After this election the DP began to reform the role of Islam in Turkish public life. The Democrat Party government set up special secondary schools for the training of *imams* and preachers in 1951. They proposed ending prohibition (began during the RPP's tenure) on the call to prayer (the *Ezan* in Arabic) (Ahmad, 1993). The DP began describing the Republicans as communists and 'unbelievers' and boasted about the number of mosques and religious schools opened under the Democrats. Zürcher demonstrates the rise of Islam in Turkish public life below:

The relaxation of secularist policies under the DP made Islam much more prominent in everyday life in the cities, where the culture of the countryside was anyway becoming more visible through the massive urbanisation. Turkish intellectuals at the time – and later – saw this as a resurgence of Islam, but although there were fundamentalist groups at work, it was really only the existing traditional culture of the mass of the population, the former subject class, reasserting its right to express itself (Zürcher, 2003: 245).

As mentioned, Sufi orders were banned by Mustafa Kemal's regime until the 1950s. The DP's material interest for electoral pressure helped to revive new Sufi orders such as '*Nurcular*'⁴ and '*Süleymançılar*'⁵. They cooperated with the DP due to

⁴ The *Nur Movement* (Turkish: *Nurculuk*) is a religious movement in Turkey based on the writings of Said Nursi (d. 1960), which promoted the concept of the Quran as a "living document" which needed to be continually re-interpreted.

its support of pro-Islamic policies. Nevertheless, the DP tried to find a balance between secularists and Islamists up until the 1957 election. For instance, as one of the extremist Islamic groups, *Ticani's*⁶ leader Kemal Pilavoğlu was given a jail sentence due to his anti-Atatürk speeches during this period (Ahmad, 1991: 11). By the 1957 election, the DP had begun to erode its position. Zührer (2003: 245) points out that the DP needed *shayks*, landlords or their allies in Anatolia because they were 'vote banks' for elections. The DP demanded their support due to the decline in its power after 1954. Ahmad (1993) explains that the DP's leader and Prime Minister, Adnan Menderes, tried to woo *Nurcus'* leader, Said-i Nursi⁷, whose influence was thought to be considerable. He argues that although Menderes reduced his majority in the 1957 election, the role of Sufi orders and Islam may have played a part in the DP's victory.

Overall, the conflict between secularists and Islamists receded during the DP's rule and the DP tried to cooperate with Islamists and Sufi orders due to electoral pressure. Although this support was based on the DP's interests, it is clear that the role of Islam increased in everyday life, especially in the Anatolia. This situation would become one of the important indicators to explain the creation of the *Milli Görüş's* movement in Turkish politics after the 1970s.

2. Milli Görüş (National Vision) Movement

The political cadres that formed the AKP in 2001 had impeccable Islamist credentials. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his colleagues learned their trade under

⁵ After the banning of religious education in 1925 a group under the leadership of Süleyman Hilmi Tunahan vowed to continue teaching the Quran to individuals and small groups. Tunahan received his own religious education in the Naqshbandi-Khalidi order. This movement came to be known as the *Süleymancı*, which aimed primarily at providing Quranic education and keeping the mosques open.

⁶ Ticani is a religious sect which was active in the 1930's and 1940's, spoke for the reinstatement of the call-to-prayer in Arabic and even going so far as to smash statues of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

⁷ Said-i Nursi is a Turkish Islamic leader and thinker from Turkey's Kurdish region. Founder of the Nurculuk movement. His outlook was shaped by the Naqshbandi tariqah and westernization in the Ottoman administration.

Turkish Islamism's modern founder, Necmettin Erbakan⁸, the political and theological driving force behind the *Milli Görüş* (National Outlook) movement. Rooted in the humble beginnings of the "Turkish Union", a small conservative association formed in 1967 by migrants in Berlin, over a short period of time *Milli Görüş* became one of the leading Turkish diaspora organisations in Europe and one of the largest Islamic organisations in the Western world by the end of the 1960s (Vielhaber, 2012: 47-48). Necmettin Erbakan, who is considered the ideologue of *Milli Görüş* has frequently visited the European branches of this movement and the organisation supported Erbakan to expand this movement towards Turkish politics (Çarkoğlu and Rubin, 2006, p.63-64). Erbakan's manifesto, "*Adil Düzen*" (Just Order) was published in 1969 (Vielhaber, 2012: 48). With the organisation's extensive financial support, Erbakan founded the National Order Party (MNP-*Milli Nizam Partisi*) in 1970, which was the first in a series of political parties that would carry the *Milli Görüş* flame.

Erbakan's party, the National Salvation Party, was active in the 1970s but was suppressed by the military regime in 1980. After 1980, the same social groups from *Milli Görüş* established the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*- RP) in 1983. After the 1987 referendum, which allowed ex-politicians to enter into politics after their banning during 1980 military coup, Necmettin Erbakan and some of the pre-1980 Islamic figures took over the leadership of the Welfare Party (Zürcher, 2003: 299). However, the Welfare Party would not become important political actors until the mid-1990s due to the influence of Özal's leadership. Turgut Özal was the first elected Prime Minister after the military government controlled most of the religious groups like Sufi orders and conservative people in Anatolian cities and villages supporting Özal's party, the Motherland Party (ANAP), in elections during this period (Atasoy, 2009:128). Öniş (1997: 756) indicates this phenomenon and argues that it was Özal's personality and his unusual combination of a liberal Western orientation with a strong attachment to Islam. A connection confirmed by his link to the National Salvation Party in 1970 that held the liberal 'and' conservative' factions of the ANAP

⁸ Necmettin Erbakan, the former Turkish prime minister who died on 27 February 2011 aged 84, was his country's most prominent Islamic politician, and an intellectual father to many key figures in the dominant party of the last decade, the incumbent AKP.

together under one umbrella (Öniş, 1997: 757). After Özal became president, the ANAP changed his position and moved from a conservative to a more liberal outlook with Mesut Yılmaz's leadership (Coşar and Özman, 2004: 57-74). The RP began to rise in Turkish politics because ANAP lost its influence on conservative voters after Özal's death.

Nevertheless, some other scholars explain the rise of the Welfare Party after 1990 differently. For instance, Gülalp (2001: 442-443) argues that the major reason for this phenomenon was the global crisis of modernism. While the Islamists mentioned in this chapter were left out of the centre of the state, the crisis that the modernisation had entered in the 1990s provided a new field of struggle for Islamic elements on this periphery. He explains this phenomenon below:

...in Turkey the crisis of modernisation led to Islamism. Islamist themes, such as anti-Westernism, championing the periphery against the centre, and emphasizing the particularism of Islamic culture, began to find resonance among the post-modernist sensibilities of a new generation of students and other intellectuals whose counterparts in the West favored environmentalism and multi-culturalism as political project (Gülalp, 2001: 443).

As a result of Islamist movements against Kemalist ideology, the Welfare Party increased its power, especially in rural areas of Anatolia. How has this been achieved and what role did the conflict between the Islamists and the Kemalists play in supporting it? While giving the answer to this question, it is necessary to concentrate on the issue of migration, which became an important phenomenon in Turkey in the 1990s. The immigration wave of those from Anatolia to the big cities in the 1990s was one of the important factors explaining this success (Narlı, 1999: 42). The underdeveloped areas, which are the subject of immigration from the Anatolia to the big cities, became the primary electoral base of the RP in the elections. Bayramoğlu notes that:

In RP, there is conjunctural solidarity with dozens of different identities. Moderate Muslim identity, Islamic identity, Kurdish identity, Central Anatolia, the poor parts of the *gecekond*, Devout minority merchants and industrialists of Anatolian origin excluded by the overpowering, the lower middle classes in the central districts ... These are all different identities in the RP (Bayramoğlu, 2001: 27).

The RP, which entered parliament in the 1991 elections, has also been differentiated from the principles of the Milli Görüş movement. Erbakan defined this period as 'those who are members of the Welfare Party and those who are waiting to become a member of the Welfare Party', rather than *Milli Görüş*'s anti-Western and anti-American perspective. The findings of Olivier Roy in this regard is even more striking: 'Western type political party which is trying to adopt the maximum number of elements in the elections and multi-party system framework: the Welfare Party in Turkey' (Roy, 2005: 72).

Moreover, the Welfare Party's view on secularism is different to its successor, the MSP. Before the elections, Erbakan focused on the critics of authoritarian secularism under Mustafa Kemal's rule rather than the rejection of secularism (Ercan, 2012: 364-365). Öniş (1997: 743-766) argues that, according to Erbakan, the militant or authoritarian secularism associated with the Republic has limited the rights of individuals in a country with a predominantly Muslim population to practise their religion freely. The Welfare Party's 1995 Election Guide (*Refah Partisi*, 1995:19) outlines that 'Imitators (i.e. Kemalists) took advantage of the fact that the 'secular' word was a foreign word, and secularism was implemented in the form of the enemy of religion. But nowhere in the world is secularism an enemy of religion. On the contrary, it means that all beliefs are guaranteed'. According to this declaration, the most important right after the right to life is the freedom of religion. Obviously, the Welfare Party aims to establish a truly 'secular' regime in which any restrictions concerning the free practice of Islam will no longer be tolerated. It was to establish an alternative model to Western civilisation. One of the other important factors in the rise of the Welfare Party was that it suggested Ottomanism as an alternative model.

During the political history of the Welfare Party, Erbakan and his colleagues focused on an anti-Western perspective with the criticism of authoritarian secularism under Mustafa Kemal's regime. The other important difference from other *Milli Görüş*'s parties is the emphasizing of Ottoman heritage in Turkish politics in the Welfare Party. Tanıl Bora, a prominent analyst of Turkish politics, interpreted this as 'the continuation of Özalpian neo-Ottomanism' (Bora, 1996: 23). Another scholar of Turkish politics, Ahmet Insel, argues that *Refah* (Welfare Party) narrows the inclusive parameters of Islamic identity by punctuating it in terms of Turkish-Ottoman historical particularities (Insel, 1996: 31). Neo-Ottomanism, thus, has a powerful ethnic Turkish meaning by positioning Turkey at the centre of a new imperial project to 'lead' the Muslim world. This ethno-religious (Turkish-Islamic) neo-Ottomanism is distinct from the 'Ottomanism' that was officially promoted by the Ottoman state (Dağı, 1993: 71-77).

Indeed, The RP wanted to recover the glorious position of Muslims and Turkish-Muslims (e.g. the Ottomans) in history. This could only be achieved by an *ummah* in the Turkish state, which must 'straighten' itself up by attaining its lost virtues. Winning the reputation of the Refah Party's Turkey in the Muslim world would also open up an alternative model that could be developed against the West. For this reason, the concept of Ottomanism was emphasizing the nation system of the Ottoman Empire. It was stated that it would stay away from a radical Islamist model. This Ottomanist movement evolved into neo-Ottomanism especially under the influence of Ahmet Davutoglu in the AKP government. However, this research argues that the tolerance of non-Muslim societies during the early Ottoman period would not be possible given the RP's agenda. Although the RP's foreign policy focused on some Balkan countries and former Ottoman lands, which is mentioned in the Davutoğlu's article (Davutoğlu, 1997: 35-36), this was not equal to the Gaza theory of the early Ottoman period because Erbakan aimed to only defend Muslims and also to expand Islam in these areas in a non-peaceful or intolerant way. Atasoy (2009: 125-130) indicates that Erbakan's perspective had classic orthodox Islamic values in contrast with the early Ottoman period and was more like Abdulhamid II's Pan-Islamism. As discussed before, Abdulhamid's Islamism rallied support from the Muslim lands to ensure the survival of the Ottoman Empire and its own power. Like

Abdulhamid II, the Welfare Party wanted to establish itself in Turkish political life with an alternative model to the West, and Ottomanism was also conducive to this objective. A similar political survival strategy will be seen once more in the third term of the AKP and will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

The other explanation for the rise of the Welfare Party in Turkish politics comes from an economic perspective. The Islamist movement criticizes the current economic system in the founding document of *Adil Düzen* (Just Order) and offers suggestions for solutions in this direction. The *Milli Görüş* had two objectives in its economic perspective. The first was to attract people in Anatolia who were outside of the centre of the state and economically impoverished with economic promises. According to the *Adil Düzen* and Welfare Party election declarations (*Refah Partisi*, 1995: 14-15), 'There will be no interest in the new vision of *Milli Görüş*, the unfair tax will be removed, the value of money will be accepted as the right measure, money will not be reduced and credits will be useful in fair measures'. With the emphasis on the principles of equality and justice, *Milli Görüş* aimed to get the support of the masses excluded by the Kemalist regime in Anatolia.

The second main objective was to support the medium-sized conservative economic actors who were at the periphery of the state and were being weakened by pro-Western free-market actors. Hakan Yavuz (1997: 63-82) indicates that Turkey's open-door trade policies along with Özal's neo-liberal policies helped to establish the Welfare Party, because the conservative bourgeoisie had been created with the establishment of the Association of Independent Businessman (*Müstakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği- MÜSİAD*) and other similar economic institutions. Moreover, Sufi orders such as *Nakşibendis* played a prominent role in developing their business connections and facilitated their penetration into the economy (Akdogcm, 2007: 207-230). Indeed, Islamist groups such as *Nakşibendis* strengthened year by year during the 1990s both politically and economically.

This section of this chapter focuses on the rise of the Welfare Party in Turkish politics in relation to the concept of political survival in Turkish politics. Their popular vote increased over the years until they became the largest party under Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan in the 1996 election. Erbakan established a coalition government with the True Path Party (*Doğru Yol Partisi*- DYP) after the election. Turkey was faced with a strong Islamist party in government. However, this situation did not continue for long. Erbakan's Welfare Party used his religious perspective on domestic and foreign policy rather than attempting to create 'true secularism' in Turkey (Somer, 2007: 1284). The Welfare Party became a serious threat to liberal, left and centre-right supporters due to its pro-Islamic agendas in Turkish politics (Zürcher, 2003: 306-307). Moreover, Erbakan and his party took on military powers during this period. The coalition government of Erbakan was forced out of power by the Turkish military on 28 February 1997. In 1998, the Welfare Party was banned from politics by the Constitutional Court of Turkey for violating the separation of religion and state as mandated by the constitution. After the banning of the RP, the *Milli Görüş* movement founded the Virtue Party in December 1998. Although their agenda came from the RP, they did not become successful like the RP until 2001. The Virtue Party was found to be unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court and then banned in June 2001 for violating the secularist articles of the Constitution. After that, the *Milli Görüş* movement split into two parts: the reformist AKP and the traditionalist Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*- SP) (Atacan, 2005: 188-189).

While entering Turkish politics with an anti-Western policy understanding in its first foundation period, *Milli Görüş* has shown serious changes since the 1990s, but despite these changes, *Milli Görüş*'s political parties' survival has not been able to last long. This is why the *Milli Görüş* has not been able to survive and the AKP has taken lessons from this experience.

As with many other Islamists from the nineteenth century, the *Milli Görüş*'s manifesto called for a radical rejection of secular 'Western' values and opposition to all kinds of 'infidel' economic and political ideas. The agenda of the manifesto was

the overthrow of the Kemalist secular system in Turkey and its replacement with what Erbakan described as an *Adil Düzen* based on Islam. According to Şebnem Gümüşçü (2010: 857), the *Milli Görüş* movement under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan has implicitly envisioned an Islamic state, and it explicitly aimed for Islamization of Turkish society. Mardin (2006: 238) argues that Erbakan held a romanticized view of Islam's early days during the first generations after the death of the Prophet Muhammad and he called for a return to their model by purifying society of its un-Islamic influences. He blamed the moral and political decline of Turkey on corrupting Western influences through which the Kemalist regimes weakened Islam in Turkey. As Güneş Murat Tezcur (2010: 81) points out, for Erbakan, 'Islam was a holistic ideology that was in an inevitable struggle with the West.' Vielhaber (2012: 49) argues that, "Erbakan's political rhetoric was typical of other mainstream Islamists of his generation. He frequently used Manichean language, describing a fundamental struggle between 'us versus them,' 'good versus evil,' and 'us against the West and the Jews.'" Bahri Zengin, who is an important member of all political parties which were founded by *Milli Görüş*' ideology, explains this struggle further:

...The West has not been able to create a world or a political system free of domination. Here is the main difference between East/ Islam and others. According to Islam, sovereignty belongs to God, but this does not mean that somebody can dominate nature or a group of people in the name of God. It simply means the emergence of a new model where nobody can dominate the other. That is why the political philosophy is different. Everybody is equal before the law. Western philosophy is based on domination and hence on power. As a result, it is colonialist and imperialist. That is why the West uses different ways of discrimination against others in the name of civilisation, evolution, etc. In this framework *Milli Görüş* is the name of a movement which tries to establish a new civilisation in the world (Atacan, 2005: 190).

Zengin's view shows that one of the most prominent features of *Milli Görüş*'s political agenda during the foundation period is the dream of establishing a new Islamist civilisation with an anti-Western mentality. During his short tenure as the Prime Minister of Turkey, Erbakan founded the 'Developing Eight,' (D-8) which was

intended as an Islamic equivalent to the Western-dominated 'Group of Seven' (Aral, 2006: 89-107). The *Milli Görüş*'s perspective is also crucial in terms of the main arguments of this research. This study, which does not claim the AKP as the continuation of *Milli Görüş*, also argues that the AKP has learnt from the *Milli Görüş* period. One of these lessons is to reject the Anti-Western policy of *Milli Görüş*. *Milli Görüş* could not stay in power in Turkish politics because he could not get support from any power in the centre of the centre-periphery dichotomy and any Western actor. The AKP is aware of this danger and has integrated conservatism with concepts such as human rights, democracy and freedom of religion and has reached a legitimate position in Turkish politics.

Another lesson that the AKP has learned from the National Vision movement is to keep electoral support as high as possible while ensuring political survival. Especially after the February 28th, the Welfare Party's failure to raise the voter turnout rates was one of the most important factors in its loss of political survival. In the first part of Chapter 1, the lessons learned from these failings of *Milli Görüş* will be explored. At the same time, there are also intervening variables that clarify the cause-and-effect mechanism between the AKP's legitimisation process and its political survival.

In this chapter, these intervening variables, such as the 28 February 1997 military coup or EU-US support for the AKP, will be examined in detail. This chapter will examine how these variables were effective in legitimising the AKP's conservative identity and how this situation has become a pre-condition for the AKP's political survival. Before explaining these variables in detail, it is necessary to examine how the AKP was established and the divisions in the *Milli Görüş* movement at the end of 1990s.

3. The Origins of the AKP

3.1. The Closure of the Welfare Party

Before explaining the AKP's original principles in 2002, this chapter will examine how the AKP was created and what the differences between the AKP and the *Milli Görüş* movement were after the closure of the Welfare Party. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Welfare Party (RP - *Refah Party*) had increased its power by 1996 when it became a coalition member of the government in Turkey. However, there were serious tensions between the military and economic bureaucracy and the RP government after 1996 and Erbakan's government had not been successful in decreasing this tension (Özbudun, 2006: 545). The major economic institutions such as *TÜSİAD* (Turkish Industrialists and Businessman's Association), *TESK* (Confederation of Tradesmen and Handcrafts), and *TÜRK-İŞ* (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions) criticised the RP's economic plans and saw the RP as a serious threat to a secular republic. They were in favour of a military bureaucracy against the RP-True Path Party (DYP - *Doğru Yol Partisi*) coalition government (Atacan, 2005: 193).

As a result of these developments, the National Security Council made some decisions on 28 February 1997 that gave advice to the government in order to prevent anti-secular activities occurring around the country. Islamic fundamentalism - such as Kurdish separatism - had become a serious threat to the Turkish Republic according to the council's declaration (Çınar, 2006: 472). Military commanders strongly criticised Erbakan's government due to his support for anti-secular activities and other social and economic groups in society supported the military bureaucracy against Erbakan's government (Tombuş, 2013: 317). This decision, which was called a 'soft coup', led to the resignation of Erbakan's government. Moreover, the RP was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 1998 for having violated the secularist principles of the Turkish constitution. In fact, the 28 February coup laid the foundations for the establishment of a new party, which became the AKP.

3.2. The Virtue Party

After the closure of the Welfare Party and Erbakan's and other party members' political ban of five years, the RP was replaced by the Virtue Party which was founded by former RP members. Although most people claimed that the Virtue Party (FP - *Fazilet Partisi*) was the continuation of the RP, the FP attempted to present a less confrontational and more reform-oriented stance than its predecessor (Dağı, 2006: 91). It is clear that the FP preferred far more market-friendly economic policies and was supportive of developing close relations with the European Union. The FP's agenda shifted to the extension of religious freedoms within the boundaries of the existing secular order, in contrast to the RP's agenda (Atacan, 2005: 194). Moreover, some former Motherland Party members were invited into the FP because it wanted to prevent claims that it was a continuation of the RP (Yeşilada, 2006: 68).

Despite these developments, the FP was not successful in its attempts to raise its power and popularity in Turkey. The FP had become the third party and lost its votes in the 1999 general election. While the Welfare Party signalled the biggest success of Milli Görüş's history in the 1995 elections and received about 21% of the votes, the Virtue Party, which was a continuation of the Welfare Party, lost 25% of its votes in the 1999 elections and received only 15% of the vote (Cem, Kirmanoğlu and Şenatalar, 2005: 551). Indeed, critics of the RP's anti-secular policies did not disappear during the FP period (Gülalp, 2001: 434). Moreover, although Erbakan was banned from Turkish politics for five years, most people believed that Erbakan controlled the FP. A group of individuals from the younger generation - called *Yenilikçiler* (reformists) - were uncomfortable with Erbakan's intervention in party politics (Atacan, 2005: 193). *Yenilikçiler* heavily criticised FP leader Recai Kutan because they believed that he was controlled by Erbakan (Larabee and Rabasa, 2008: 45-46). On the one hand, *Yenilikçiler* thought that the party leadership and its anti-democratic policies lost votes in the 1999 election. It claimed that this party had become the new RP under the secret leadership of Erbakan. On the other hand, *Gelenekçiler* (traditionalist), which had close links with Erbakan, identified this group as 'dividers' of the *Milli Görüş* movement (Selim, 2002: 50).

Yenilikçiler requested some changes to the party structure as well as its ideology and demonstrated against a candidate for the leadership, Abdullah Gül, at the Virtue Party Congress in 2000 (Larabee and Rabasa 2008: 45). The most important point of this conflict was the position of former Motherland Party members and centre-right members of the FP who were the promoters of the Turkish-Islamic synthesis of Turgut Özal's government. Some of them, such as Abdulkadir Aksu, Cemil Çiçek and Ali Coşkun strongly supported the group. Despite this support for *Yenilikçiler*, Recai Kutan, who was supported by Erbakan, won this congress and regained the leadership of the FP (Özbudun, 2006: 546). At the time, Kutan and other traditionalists emphasized the stability of Virtue Party. Relations between the two camps soon worsened. Following a meeting between Abdullah Gül and Deniz Baykal, leader of the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP - *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), traditionalists in the FP decided to send Gül and the other reformist followers, such as Bülent Arınç and Abdüllatif Şener to the disciplinary committee of the party (Yeşilada, 200: 69).

3.3. The Division within the *Milli Görüş* movement

After the congress of 2000, the *Milli Görüş* movement had other problems with its future. The FP would be closed by the Constitutional Court in 2001 for similar reasons to the RP's closure; its threat to the Turkish Constitution due to its anti-secular activities. This situation caused a new problem within the party. The *Yenilikçiler* opposition group members became free to establish a political party which defended their own values (Boyraz, 2011: 152). It is clear that this conflict divided the supporters of the *Milli Görüş* movement. Yeşilada shows this phenomenon using surveys:

... In this survey, the interviewees were also asked to identify themselves as being close to the Reformists or the Traditionalists or both. They were then asked to indicate their preference for the successor party to the FP—should it follow the National View or be a more moderate political party? As expected, those who felt

close to the Traditionalists preferred the National View by 78 to 18.3%. The pro-Reformists chose the more moderate approach by 85.2 to 11.8%. Those in the middle split their choice: National View (44.8%) and moderate (44.6%) (Yeşilada, 2002: 77).

As seen in this survey, the Virtue Party must be divided into reformists and traditionalists. This division in the *Milli Görüş* movement was researched and analysed by Islamist author Yavuz Selim. Yavuz Selim's book *Yol Ayrımı* contains interviews with 26 politicians who were members of the FP. Some of them come from *Yenilikçiler*, but some of them supported Erbakan and his colleagues. This book is one of the sources that helps explain the conflict between *Yenilikçiler* and *Gelenekçiler* in the *Milli Görüş* movement. *Yenilikçiler* argue that Erbakan's authoritarianism and *Milli Görüş*'s anti-Western ideology should be changed. For instance, Bülent Arınç, one of the most important members of the RP and the founder member of the AKP, argues:

This system is totally wrong. It is not humanitarian and it is not Islamic. I had supported opponent groups for this reason. I saw this phenomenon for 30 years. 'This movement, this action etc.'; all of them are silly ideas. They are caused by 4-5 people who take a stand against other people. They blunted us. They created many difficulties for us. Erbakan likes money and he likes comfortable politicians. He does not care about oppressed people (Selim, 2001: 47).

The first issue of the *Yenilikçiler* in *Milli Görüş* is that the movement is entirely under Erbakan's control. The absence of the notion of intra-party democracy coupled with the Welfare Party's anti-Western agenda was seen as a major problem for the *Yenilikçiler* group to protect the political survival of the *Milli Görüş* movement. Another important *Yenilikçiler* figure in the *Milli Görüş* movement is Abdullah Gül, who became a candidate against Recai Kutan of the Virtue Party Congress in 2000. Gül believes that this movement should change its direction from an anti-Western ideology to moderate policies towards the Western world. Gül gave his views in an interview with Yavuz Selim:

... Erbakan's wording and his speeches were far removed from reality. We opposed him sometimes but he continued using his wording. I believe that these speeches had a negative impact on the Western world. Western countries did not support the *Milli Görüş* movement due to these speeches. If our movement had presented democratic, transparent, moderate policies during this period, the RP-DYP coalition government would not have had difficulties or problems (Selim, 2001: 73-74).

According to Selim's interpretation of the AKP party's founding staff; the division in the *Milli Görüş* movement was inevitable due to the conflict between *Gelenekçiler* and *Yenilikçiler*. After the suppression of the FP, the four most important members of the *Yenilikçiler* group – Bülent Arınç, Abdullah Gül, Abdülatif Şener and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – established a new political party by the name of the Justice and Development Party (Bogdani, 2011). However, *Gelenekçiler*, who supported Necmettin Erbakan, founded the Felicity Party. The Felicity Party (SP - *Saadet Partisi*) claimed that it was the only representative of the *Milli Görüş* movement. Yeşilada (2013: 69) points out that the SP's emblem is a white crescent with five stars on a red background - the five stars represent (1) love, peace of mind, and peace, (2) human rights, freedom, and democracy, (3) justice, (4) welfare (*refah*), and (5) self-respect and honor. The number 'five' also represents the number of political parties that the National View has established over the years - the MNP, MSP, RP, FP, and SP (Yeşilada, 2002: 68-69).

It is clear that the Felicity Party did not accept the AKP as the representative of the *Milli Görüş* movement. Bahri Zengin, one of the important founders and members of the *Milli Görüş* movement and an SP member, explains the difference between SP and the AKP in his interview with Fulya Atacan:

They wanted to follow real politics, which meant that we must act according to political restrictions in Turkey. They said that the military, the media and the big industrialists determined the political structure of Turkey and we had to try to get

their support. They were right. These powers determine politics but our mission is not to follow them but to establish a new civilisation (Atacan, 2005: 194).

After the closure of the Virtue Party, the members of *Yenilikçiler* took action in order to establish a new political party. One issue that this new political party needed to address was who would be the leader of the party. Some surveys have given clues about the debates on the party leadership. For instance, A&G Research conducted its survey of the *Milliyet* newspaper about the leadership of a new political party. According to this survey, out of 822 individuals who voted for the FP in the last national elections in the provinces of Ankara, Adana, Istanbul, İzmir, Konya, Manisa, Malatya, and Samsun, 68.8% preferred Erdoğan to lead the new political party. Gül was the second choice followed by Bülent Arınç.⁹ According to ANAR's survey, support for Erdoğan was 40.8% among all respondents and 63.8% among former FP supporters. Once again, Gül was the preferred second choice as leader of the party.¹⁰ Although Gül became a candidate for the Virtue Party Congress, Erdoğan was selected as party leader due to his support and his popularity from his time as Istanbul's mayor in 1994 (Heper and Toktaş, 2003: 157-185). Overall, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) was established in August 2001 under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The first important test for the Justice and Development Party was the 2002 general election. During this period, the AKP established two important documents that would define the AKP's political program, the AKP's first party programme and the Election Guide for 2002 Election. These documents are analysed here to explain how the AKP changed from a conservative democratic to an Islamist direction.

According to these documents, this study argues that the AKP learned two lessons from the *Milli Görüş* movement. First, the importance of secularism and fundamental rights in the Turkish state, and second, the rejection of the Welfare Party's anti-Western ideology in Turkish domestic and foreign policy (Tepe, 2005:

⁹ *Milliyet*, July 27, 2001

¹⁰ ANAR, *Haziran-2001 Türkiye Gündemi Araştırması (June-2001 Turkey's Agenda Research)* (Ankara: Anararaştırma, 2001): 14–15.

71). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Welfare Party's Election Declaration of 1995 indicated that the secularism was implemented in the form of being the enemy of religion (*Refah Partisi*, 1995: 19). The Welfare Party completely excluded secularism and emphasized the importance of religious freedoms only. The AKP's first important difference with the *Milli Görüş* tradition was internalizing secularism and interpreting religious freedoms in the context of human rights and democracy. Many clues or views about these differences can be seen in the AKP's party programme. For instance, the AKP's main aim depends on the democratisation process in Turkey and the programme states that the 'AKP considers as one of its most important tasks, the assurance of democratisation by placing the individual at the centre of all its policies, and to provide and protect fundamental human rights and freedoms' (AKP, 2002a). The other important matter for the AKP is the approach to secularism in this programme, which does not use the terms 'Islam' or 'Muslim'. The programme focused on the importance of secularism in terms of religious freedom and states that:

Secularism is a principle which allows people of all religions, and beliefs to comfortably practice their religions, to be able to express their religious convictions and live accordingly, but which also allows people without beliefs to organize their lives along these lines. From this point of view, secularism is a principle of freedom and social peace. Our Party refuses to take advantage of sacred religious values and ethnicity and to use them for political purposes. It considers the attitudes and practices which disturb pious people, and which discriminate them due to their religious lives and preferences, as antidemocratic and in contradiction to human rights and freedoms. On the other hand, it is also unacceptable to make use of religion for political, economic and other interests, or to put pressure on people who think and live differently by using religion (AKP, 2002a: 5).

There are very similar expressions in the AKP's constitution and 2002 Election Guide. According to these documents, the state should not favour or oppose any belief and thought (AKP, 2002c). The AKP's founding philosophy and documents also criticise the traditionalist wing of *Milli Görüş*, especially on the point of secularism

and human rights because the *Milli Görüş* movement, according to the AKP, aims to exert Islam by using it only for its own agenda. This is evidenced by the fact that the secularism and human rights section of the SP's 2002 election manifesto has not been widely considered and it was only evaluated with an Islamist focus (*Saadet Partisi*, 2002). However, as mentioned from the documents above, the AKP was founded with a more reformist perspective, especially in terms of secularism and human rights. Along with these documents, data from elite interviews also supports this view.

Abdullatif Şener¹¹ has played a prominent role in the establishment of the AKP. He claims that he has prepared the AKP's first party programme. He said: 'the party programme of AK Party was considered by 4-5 boards, and the members of these boards were changing quite often. However, as the chair of the board, I was always there'.¹² According to Şener, this party programme was a democratic programme that made reference to modern democratic values. Şener points out that they have avoided using the terms 'Islam' or 'conservatism' in their programme. He believes that this party programme is democratic, for instance the opponents of the party policies have freedom of opinion about the critics in their party. Şener joined and founded the party and has tried to realise his ideals, which are to prove the compatibility between Islam and democracy. Indeed, Şener did not identify the AKP an Islamist party and believes they can become an important model for the democratic concept in Muslim politics.

The second lesson taken by the AKP from *Milli Görüş* was rejecting the anti-Western policy of the *Milli Görüş*. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the AKP saw that anti-Western policies pioneered by the traditionalist elements in *Milli Görüş* could not

¹¹ Şener entered politics and was elected in 1991 as deputy of Sivas Province from the Islamist Welfare Party (RP). He was Minister of Finance from 1996 to 1997. Following the ban of the Welfare Party in 1998, he became a member of the newly established Virtue Party (FP), which was also banned after three years in 2001. He was co-founder of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2001. He was elected to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey as deputy of Sivas Province, and he served under the AKP government as Deputy Prime Minister from 2002 to 2007. He did not run for a seat in parliament in the 2007 general elections. After leaving the AK Party, he formed a new party; it was officially announced on 27 May 2009 and named the Turkey Party.

¹² Interview with Abdullatif Şener- Ankara/26th November 2015.

ensure its survival in Turkish politics. Because of this, the AKP has focused on the EU process and has improved relations with Western countries. The traditionalist Felicity Party continued to criticize the EU in the same manner as the Welfare Party.

The differences between the AKP and the traditional views of Milli Görüş's politicians are also important in terms of the main argument of this study. The first independent variable that determined the causal mechanism of AKP's survival is the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism. On the one hand, in domestic politics, the AKP's reformist initiatives on secularism and human rights, and the EU accession process in foreign policy led to the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism. On the other hand, the AKP has never left its conservative identity as a result of the sensitivity of the electorate's support, and this situation emerges as a precondition for the AKP's political survival in the first period of the AKP government. These internal and external factors are examined in detail in the next section of this chapter.

4. The Role of the 28 February Process on AKP's Political Survival

As noted in the beginning of this chapter, the Turkish military presented an ultimatum to the Islamist-dominated coalition government following a meeting of the National Security Council (MGK) on 28 February 1997. As a result of this ultimatum, the coalition of the Welfare Party-True Path Party (RP-DYP) government resigned its position but the change of government was not the only result to come from this event. In that period, the headscarf was banned in universities, the *İmam Hatip* secondary schools were closed, and the teaching of the *Quran* for children under 12 years of age was reported as 'illegal' (Açıkgöz, 2014: 50). Some liberal scholars like İhsan Dağı (2006) and Ahmet Kuru (2006) argue that the military powers expelled allegedly Islamist and avowedly pious officers. Most of the Islamic social and economic institutions faced official discrimination. Hakan Yavuz argues that the real aim of the military powers during this period was as follows:

The goal of the military was to roll back the Muslim sectors of civil society by closing off their opportunity spaces. Because of the emergence of these new opportunity spaces, Kemalist hegemony had lost its control over national and municipal layers of the state. Pro-Islamic mayors had been winning and controlling large budgets and these mayors were using the resources of municipalities to compete at the national level (Yavuz 2003: 244).

The first major success of the Welfare Party in the 1990s was the 1994 local elections. The symbolic importance of the 1994 balloting, because of its religious implications, probably exceeded the actual significance of the party's turnout. Tayyip Erdoğan, the Welfare Party's candidate for mayor of Istanbul, and Melih Gökçek, its mayoral candidate for Ankara, both won (Howe, 1998: 18). In addition, Welfare Party candidates for mayor won in twenty-seven other cities and in 400 towns, including almost all of the predominantly Kurdish municipalities in the Southeast (Bozarslan, 1996: 16-19). These results show the Welfare Party's strength in middle and lower-class urban neighbourhoods and in the Kurdish areas of the Southeast. Şerif Mardin describes this as the first steps of the movement towards the centre. This study argues that the Islamist movement with the local administrators in the periphery has moved towards to the centre of Turkish state.

During this process, the *Milli Görüş* movement and the Welfare Party's inability to show sufficient and correct political prospects for survival were highlighted, in particular by the *Yenilikçiler* group. Most the reformists in the *Milli Görüş* movement are self-critical of the political style and policies of the Welfare Party, which, they believe, contributed to the 28 February process and its subsequent political mistakes (Selim, 2002). One of them, Bülent Arınç, argues that the *Refahyol* (Welfare Party-True Path Party Coalition) experience shows the need to acknowledge the guardianship role of the military in Turkey, which should be taken into account as a political reality. Arınç stated that 'If we are to be realistic 'we should not come up against and clash with the military.' (Cizre and Çınar, 2003: 326).

Bülent Arınç and other reformist politicians in the Welfare Party, as well as criticizing Erbakan on 28 February military coup showed how the AKP would legitimize its conservative identity under the auspices of democratisation and civilisation. Islamist politician Ahmet Faruk Ünsal¹³ explores the importance of the 28 February military coup to explain the legitimisation of the AKP's conservative identity. Ünsal¹⁴ notes the role of 'this post-modern' coup on the establishment of the AKP. Ünsal believes that the process of the military intervention is one of the most important factors for explaining the AKP's establishment in Turkish politics. This process destroyed and removed the *Milli Görüş* movement from Turkish politics and reformists in *Milli Görüş* needed to establish a new political party to espouse their discourse. The AKP has been successful in this aim. A very similar perspective came from another AKP member, Yasin Aktay. Aktay is a leading politician and parliamentary member of the AKP in the Turkish Assembly. Aktay thinks that the 28 February process damaged the role of Islamism in Turkish politics and the AKP must provide a new ideology, like conservative democracy, rather than Islamism in order to increase its power in Turkish politics.¹⁵

As discussed above, the 28 February process played a prominent role in developing the AKP's conservative identity and this research conducted an interview with one of the victims of 28 February, Hüda Kaya¹⁶. Kaya is an important political figure for the process tracing method of the research to probe the role of Islam in the

¹³ Faruk Ünsal was an AKP member of Parliament from 2002 and 2007 and he is currently head of an Islamist human rights organisation called Mazlum-Der.

¹⁴ Interview with Ahmet Faruk Ünsal-Ankara/ 23 November 2015.

¹⁵ Interview with Yasin Aktay- Ankara/ 3 December 2015.

¹⁶ This research chooses some interviewees from Kurdish-Islamist political actors due to their support for the AKP's establishment process in light of 28 February postmodern coup's role. Hüda Kaya is one of these actors. Kaya had a political line from an ultra-nationalist thought to Islamic one, from actions of *türban* (headscarf) to Kandil Mountains. Before the 1980 coup in Turkey, she was part of the youth wing of the extremist nationalist movement. When she read the Qur'an, she came to critique the nationalist variety of Islam aggressively preached by the Turkish state—including the reigning AKP government. Her arrival in Malatya coincided with the wave of repression against the elected government known as the "postmodern coup" of February 28, 1997. Kaya was arrested for a piece she wrote critiquing Islamic men in the movement. Around 500 others were arrested at the same time, including Kaya's high-school-age daughters, who were arrested for reading a prayer. In the Malatya jail, Kaya met Kurdish activists; the state's repression in the Kurdish region was intense at the time, when the war in the region was ongoing. As a result of this, she went to Kandil Mountains along with her son who had been jailed due to PKK operations in 2013. She heard about the stories of PKK members here and affected from them. Following of this visit, she has joined pro-Kurdish party, People's Democratic Party (HDP) and she is a parliament member now.

AKP's establishment process. In one of the television programmes before 2015's Presidential election, she said 'I was crying when I watched Erdoğan's balcony speech on the AKP's election victory in 2002'.¹⁷ When asked about this view she accepted that she supported Erdoğan and the AKP government during this period. Kaya claims that the Muslims who suffered under the Kemalist elites or secularists had not come to power in Turkish politics yet and the AKP was the first example of this. According to Kaya, the AKP would begin to fight against the anti-democratic 28 February process when it came to power. However, she said this does not mean the continuity of the *Milli Görüş* movement is part of the AKP's identity. Kaya¹⁸ thinks that Erdoğan and his colleagues had wanted to create a peaceful environment for non-Muslim minorities and support religious freedoms rather than orthodox Sunni Islamism when they founded the AKP in 2001.

The 28 February process was considered an opportunity for a new political entity for the opposing *Yenilikçiler* movement within the *Milli Görüş*. Cizre and Çınar explain this opportunity as follows:

The reformist faction, which eventually formed the AKP under the leadership of the prominent ex-mayor of Istanbul, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, reads the 28 February process... For reformists, the RP's policies reached an impasse because it let religious issues dominate its political agenda, it underplayed the importance of consensus-seeking and dialogue building with the other sectors of society, and it did not address itself to a broader public... The reformists' stated goal was to establish a party that would refrain from employing a rhetorical discourse, would not restrict its political horizon to Islamic issues, would pay special attention to pluralism by building a dialogue with non-Islamist sectors of society, and would be predictable, dynamic, and open to change, with no hidden agenda on critical issues (Cizre and Çınar, 2003: 326).

¹⁷ <http://haber.sol.org.tr/video/hdpli-aday-huda-kaya-balkon-konusmasini-aglayarak-dinlemistim-112929> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

¹⁸ Interview with Hüda Kaya- Ankara/2 December 2015.

While the 28 February process was one of the most important factors in legitimising the AKP's conservative identity, the search for EU and US support for the AKP was one of the most important external factors. At the same time, these internal and external factors helped the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism which is the first independent variable of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics.

5. Turkey's EU Accession Process

This chapter began by explaining the AKP's establishment and its success after the 2002 general elections. Indeed, the AKP's domestic and foreign policy agenda has been excitedly awaited by many people in Turkey and the Western world. This research claims that one of the most important agendas of the AKP's policies was EU accession. As stated throughout this chapter, the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism is the first independent variable of AKP's political survival. This first independent variable has internal and external determinants such as the EU process. The *Milli Görüş* movement focused on anti-Western ideology in Turkish domestic and foreign policy, but the AKP rejected *Milli Görüş'* agenda and EU accession became one of the most important goals for Erdoğan's government. This chapter will summarise how Turkey's EU accession process developed in the 1990s (before the AKP) and how the AKP managed this process to its advantage by using the notions of Westernisation and conservative democracy.

The European Union rejected Turkey's application for candidate status in 1997 at the Luxembourg Council of Europe due to its poor human rights record and tensions with Greece. The Turkish government believed the EU's decision to be extremely critical and did little to encourage Turkey to fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria (Hale, 2011: 324). Then Prime Minister Mesut Yılmaz threatened the European Union with withdrawing Turkey's membership application and froze relations with the EU (Özer, 2016). Smith indicates that Yılmaz and his government thought that some European countries, especially Germany, were pursuing a policy of *Lebensraum*, which was Hitler's foreign policy and Germany's policy is not related to the human rights problems in Turkey (Smith, 2003: 119-120). On the other hand, the politics of

Turkey changed with the 1999 election. The far-right National Action Party won about 17% of the vote in this election becoming the second-largest party in parliament and a partner of the coalition government until 2002. The EU was concerned about this situation due to the Eurosceptic views of the National Action Party (Düzgüt and Keyman, 2007). In conjunction with this concern, despite of all these negative events and developments, the EU finally recognised Turkey as a candidate country at the Helsinki Summit of December 1999 (Yılmaz, 2016: 86-100).

After the Helsinki Summit of 1999, the EU placed outlined some short and medium-term conditions for full membership. Smith (2003: 130-131) explains that strengthening freedom of expression, civil society, stamping out torture, giving opportunities for legal redress against human rights violations, intensifying human rights training for law enforcement officials, and maintaining the moratorium on capital punishment were some important short-term aims for Turkey to fulfil to be able to join the EU. Over the medium-term, Turkey needed to guarantee all human rights and fundamental freedoms, improve freedom of thought and religion, review the Turkish constitution to improve protections for human rights and freedoms, abolish the death penalty, improve detention conditions in prisons, and guarantee cultural rights for all citizens (Smith, 2003: 130-132). As a result of these conditions, the Turkish government started to build a framework where Turkey carried out political reforms in order to fulfill the Copenhagen Criteria (Aydın-Düzgüt and Kaliber, 2016: 1-14). Moreover, the Turkish authorities prepared a 'National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis' in March 2001 (Doğan, 2006: 243-259). Following the National Programme, political reform continued with 34 constitutional amendments taking place in October 2001.

After the 2002 election, EU authorities and the Western world awaited Erdoğan's and the AKP's policy towards the EU accession process. As mentioned above, EU accession is one of the most important aims of the AKP's foreign policy due to *Milli Görüş's* anti-Western ideology. In the 2002 AKP Election Guide and the AKP's Party Programme, it was claimed that Turkey would rapidly fulfill its promises in its relations with the European Union and the conditions which the union demands of other candidate nations as well (AKP, 2002a; 2002c). AKP politicians' view on

the European Union has changed dramatically. For instance, the first prime minister of the AKP government, Abdullah Gül identified the EU as a 'Christian club' when he was a young politician in the *Milli Görüş* movement (Çınar, 2006: 469-486). However, after the establishment of the AKP, Abdullah Gül has become one of the more prominent politicians with regard to relations with Western countries and the EU. Abdullah Gül described Turkey-EU relations as follows:

Turkey's EU membership will mean that Europe has achieved such maturity that it can incorporate a major Muslim country into its fold. And that EU stands for common values and institutions rather than common religion. For Turkey, EU membership will mean anchoring more than a century old western vocation into highest standards of democratisation, good governance and integration. For the world, this would evidence that civilisations line up in terms of their democratic vocation, and not on the basis of religion (Gül, 2007: 29).

Abdullah Gül, the ex-member of Welfare Party (which portrays the European Union as a satanic organisation) naturally has a pragmatic perspective on the issue. The main reason for this pragmatism is the fact that the Welfare Party had many difficulties ensuring the *Milli Görüş*'s survival of both international and domestic politics due to its anti-EU and anti-Western propaganda. Similar pragmatic expressions came from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who made very aggressive anti-Western speeches at the beginning of the 1990s in the Welfare Party. Erdoğan went to meetings and conferences in Western countries in order to explain the AKP's conservative democracy and its differences from the *Milli Görüş* movement. In a speech at Oxford University in 2004, Erdoğan explained why Turkey needs the EU and why the EU needs Turkey:

We in Turkey have reconciled our traditional Islamic culture with our secular and democratic structures. We have demonstrated that a country with an overwhelmingly Muslim population could turn its face to and integrate with the Western world ... We have targeted not the conflict of civilisations, but their meeting in Turkey ... There should be no doubt that Turkey's full membership will reinforce the desire and will for cohabitation between the Christians and Muslims

... Being a European who understands Europeaness as 'politics commanded by values', I would expect all that I have said to be put on record as expressed for the common good of Europe and the world (İçener and İçener, 2011: 28).

Erdoğan's speech was an effort to prove that the AKP was not an anti-EU party like the Welfare Party had been since its establishment in 2001. As explained in the beginning of this chapter, there were clear signs of *Milli Görüş*'s anti-Western ideology with Necmettin Erbakan's speeches and policies about the Western countries. However, the AKP differed from the *Milli Görüş* movement in terms of the EU accession process and Europeanisation (Keyman, 2010: 322). As a result of these views and developments, the EU accession process continued apace until 2005. The Turkish assembly passed nine harmonisation packages before 2004. These packages aimed to improve and protect workers' rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association, the right to demonstrate, freedom of thought, and cultural rights, especially for minority groups (Düzgit and Keyman, 2007: 69-89). Official negotiations had begun with the European Union in October 2005. It was an important moment for the AKP in proving its conservative democrat and pro-European identity. However, these positive developments have not continued after 2005 due to the inefficient reform process on the human rights records and democratic issues in Turkish law. William Hale summarizes this inefficient reform process as below:

Between 2001 and 2005, Turkey made remarkable advances in the improvement of human rights. However, over the next four years, the reform process slackened severely, causing pessimists to predict that it might evaporate altogether. A commonly given explanation for this was that, up to 2005, Turkish governments had a powerful incentive to improve Turkey's human rights regime, as demanded by the European Union (EU) as an essential condition for the start of accession negotiations. Once these negotiations had officially begun in October 2005, it was suggested, the incentive for further reform slackened significantly. This effect was compounded by the fact that some European leaders, in France and Germany in particular, now voiced open opposition to the whole principle of eventual Turkish membership, strengthening the arguments of

those in Turkey who opposed further political reforms or closer alignment with the EU.” (Hale 2011: 323).

As Hale emphasized, the AKP has proven that it has not been anti-EU with regard to the EU accession process. Yet, another goal of the AKP was to establish good relations with Western countries and the US, which the Welfare Party had undermined. This would be another external factor that enabled the AKP to become a legitimate actor in Turkish politics as a conservative party.

6. The Importance of US and Western Support in the AKP's Establishment

The second important issue during the AKP's establishment was the support of the United States and Western countries for the party and Erdoğan's government. After the 2002 election, EU authorities and the Western world awaited Erdoğan's and the AKP's policy towards the EU accession process. As discussed in Chapter 3, the EU accession is one of the most important agendas of the AKP in terms of Turkish foreign policy due to *Milli Görüş's* anti-Western ideology. In the AKP 2002 Election Guide and the AKP's Party Programme, they pointed out that Turkey shall rapidly fulfil its promises in its relations with the European Union and the conditions, which the union demands of other candidate nations as well. Moreover, the AKP has been seen as the 'moderate Islamist party model' by the United States after the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the rise of fundamentalism in the Middle East. Some of my interviewees focused on this issue during the interviews.

One of these interviews was with Ruhsar Demirel, a deputy leader of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP - *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*). Demirel gives a different perspective from the other participants when exploring the AKP's founding process. Demirel points out that the external interference in Turkish politics before 2002 helped to create and cause the rise of the Justice and Development Party. The

divisions in the Democratic Left Party (DSP - *Demokratik Sol Partî*) and the establishment of the *Genç Party* caused the two biggest centre-right parties to gain a vote below the 10% threshold. As a result, the AKP become the ruling party in the November 2002 election. Following this, the members of parliament in the Siirt province were forced to resign their positions and scheduled a new election due to Erdoğan's candidacy. Demirel believes that internal developments in Turkish politics should be assessed with the external factors such as the US and Western support of the AKP in understanding the AKP's establishment process. Moreover, she rejected the AKP's identity as an Islamist party. She claims the AKP was founded as a huge coalition with social democrats, liberals and other elements in Turkish politics. Demirel said that 'AKP does not represent Islam or nationalism; it is a simple case or example of opportunism in Turkish politics due to its coalitional structure'.¹⁹

Like Demirel, Nimetullah Erdoğan, looked to the importance of external factors to understand the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism. Erdoğan is a former *Diyarbakır mufti* and he joined the Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP) before the June 2015 Election. He is currently a deputy of the HDP in the Turkish Assembly. According to Erdoğan, Iran's Islamic revolution was an important indicator for developments in the Middle East. The West and the United States looked to be a Sunni partner due to the threat posed by the rise of Iran's power in the Middle East. The AKP and Erdoğan's government used this Western concern against Iran and Erdoğan claims that the AKP has continued the EU accession process and reforms in many areas of Turkish politics due to this reason.²⁰

Some academics, like Özgür Özdamar, agreed with this perspective and added that the terrorist attacks on 9/11 played a part in this issue. Özgür Özdamar is Deputy Chairperson and Director of Graduate Studies at Bilkent University's Department of International Relations. His research focuses on Turkish foreign policy analysis, international relations theories and security studies. He claims that an alliance of civilisations after the attacks helped to raise the AKP's power and

¹⁹ Interview with Ruhsar Demirel- 26th November 2015/Ankara

²⁰ Interview with Nimetullah Erdoğan 19 November 2015/Ankara

popularity in international relations. He says that Turkey changed its foreign policy agenda from the notion of building an intercontinental bridge to an alliance of civilisations under Erdoğan's government.²¹ Like Özdamar and other academics at Bilkent, Ali Bilgiç²² focuses on the importance of US support for the AKP government. Bilgiç²³ argues that the United States put forward the AKP as a model of a moderate Islamic political party because of their concept of conservative democracy.

Another academic, Menderes Çınar, explains this alliance between Erdoğan and Western powers after 9/11. Menderes Çınar is a professor at Baskent University and his research is based on political Islam and the AKP in the Turkish political arena. He doesn't think that the AKP engaged in deception (*takiye*) during its relations with the United States and Western powers.²⁴ Moderate Islamist parties in the Middle East are highly important to the United States and Western countries. As a result, this alliance with the AKP has many advantages for both parties. The AKP is concerned about a lack of legitimacy in international affairs and an alliance with Western powers improves the Erdoğan government's legitimacy.

As seen in all these debates concerning the AKP's establishment process and the AKP's first term between 2002 and 2007, the participant's interpretations overlap on two common points that this research highlights. First, the AKP could not identify as a purely Islamist party due to its founding staff, establishment principles, the importance of the 28 February process, the lessons from *Milli Görüş's* failure, the concept of conservative democracy and other similar internal factors. Second, the alliance or good relations between the United States and other Western powers like the European Union during the AKP's establishment and first term played a prominent role in increasing the AKP's role in international affairs. This alliance had

²¹ Interview with Özgür Özdamar-Ankara/24th November 2015

²² Bilgiç is an Assistant Professor of International Relations at Bilkent University. His research interests include feminist postcolonial approaches, critical security studies with a focus on security, migration, contemporary protest movements, Middle East and North African politics, and Turkey's foreign policy.

²³ Interview with Ali Bilgiç- Ankara/15 December 2015

²⁴ Interview with Menderes Çınar-Ankara/22 December 2015

many advantages for the AKP in light of the first independent variable of ensuring AKP's political survival; the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism.

Indeed, Erdoğan and his colleagues avoided being called Islamist due to the inability of *Milli Görüş* to gain electoral success in Turkish politics. The Welfare Party's mistakes in securing political survival were considered an opportunity for the AKP. On the other hand, the AKP had to attract conservative electorates who support the Welfare Party. This has led to the AKP legitimising its conservative identity and avoiding being a typical centre-right party. This study claims that this situation is a pre-condition for ensuring AKP's political survival. So far we have explained why the AKP has chosen this way in Turkish politics in this chapter. The next section of this chapter asks the question, how did the AKP accomplish this? The AKP's conservative democracy is an important concept to look at for this question.

7. The Concept of Conservative Democracy

We are bringing about a *new concept* (conservative democracy), not in an abstract manner, but also in a concrete manner, and this is something that needs to be discussed, debated.... A significant part of Turkish society desires to adopt a concept of modernity that does not reject tradition, a belief in universalism that accepts localism, an understanding of rationalism that does not disregard the spiritual meaning of life, and a choice for change that is not fundamentalist. Conservative democracy is an answer to the desires of Turkish people (Tepe, 2005: 76).

This speech was made by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan at a meeting in Washington DC in 2004. Erdoğan attended similar meetings between 2002 and 2004 in order to explain the AKP's conservative democracy to the Western world. This research will explore the meaning of conservative democracy in detail in the next chapter. However, the notion of conservative democracy is important to understand the AKP's history. As Erdoğan's speech indicated, *Milli Görüş*'s anti-Western ideology would be

replaced by conservative democracy in terms of the role of Islam in Turkish politics (Kalaycioglu, 2010: 35). The issue of religious freedom and the notion of democracy played a crucial role in exploring the relations between Islam and politics in Turkey within the context of the AKP's conservative democracy (Hale, 2006). Etyen Mahçupyan identified conservative democracy as a bridge between Islam and secularism. According to Atilla Yayla, conservative democracy, like social democracy, may become a term that designates a specific socio-political ideological line (Akdoğan, 2006: 56). Although most liberal scholars, like Mahçupyan and Yayla, have offered new intellectual debates about conservative democracy, this concept was first implemented within the AKP by Yalçın Akdoğan, the former vice-prime minister of Turkey. Akdoğan's book, *AK Party and Conservative Democracy (AK Parti and Muhafazakar Demokrasi)*, offers another crucial argument to contextualise the AKP's conservative democracy. The key arguments in these books will be analysed in detail in the next chapter. Nevertheless, Akdoğan's book offers another view of how and why the AKP is different from the *Milli Görüş* movement and this chapter aims to explain this difference. Akdoğan summarises that:

... JDP's (AKP) political ideology and what political strategies it employs with that of Erbakan's National Outlook Movement (*Milli Görüş*) parties, it becomes clear that JDP has distanced itself significantly from an 'Islamic values' platform. ... The administration and government of the present-day JDP includes members who have come from the Truth Path Party, the Nationalist Action Party, and the Motherland Party. It could be said that as a conservative party the JDP, while not ignoring, the importance of the social structure. If the party's first year in government is studied, it becomes apparent that the JDP chose not to continue its previously active relationship with Islamism (Akdoğan, 2006: 63-64).

Akdoğan's argument also shows the mechanism by which the AKP enlarges its electoral base in coalition with centre-right actors and achieves a much higher vote than *Milli Görüş*. The legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism is the first independent variable when explaining the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. Moreover, this variable shows how the AKP's large

winning coalition in De Mesquita's selectorate theory is created and the next section of this chapter focuses on the AKP's large winning coalition in detail.

Coşar²⁵ argues that the AKP's establishment can be associated the rise of the centre-right in Turkish politics. Coşar claims that the continuity of the *Milli Görüş* movement lives on in the AKP's founding principles, but the main issue for this claim is the AKP's transformation of the Turkish centre-right. Centre-right parties eroded in the 2002 election. The AKP and Erdoğan tried to transform these political parties and views from the centre-right into a conservative political force using the concept of conservative democracy. Like Coşar, Yasin Aktay argues that 'conservative democracy' is the only possible concept with which to understand the survival of the AKP in Turkish political history since it is illegal to form a party on the basis of religious ideas.²⁶

Another interviewee, Mehmet Bekaroğlu²⁷, who comes from the Milli Görüş movement, discusses the pragmatism of the AKP's conservative democracy. As seen in his biography, Bekaroğlu is a well-known political figure in the Islamic sphere. He argues that the AKP is not classified as an Islamist Party as its main aim is only to legitimize a power grab in Turkish politics. Erdoğan and his colleagues established this party in order to come to power in Turkey, because conservative voters were under pressure from the military and Kemalist elites, so they looked to create a new political establishment to support it. Bekaroğlu, who identifies the AKP as a pragmatist movement, argues that the AKP has consolidated these voters by using the concept of conservative democracy. This research supports Bekaroğlu's points

²⁵ Interview with Simten Coşar- Ankara/ 8 December 2015.

²⁶ Interview with Yasin Aktay- Ankara/ 3 December 2015.

²⁷ Bekaroğlu was elected to Turkish Parliament in the 1999 general election as a Virtue Party Member for Rize. After the Virtue Party was closed down in 2001, he joined the Felicity Party and became its deputy leader. After resigning from the party, he formed an 'Islamic left' alliance with Ertuğrul Günay who resigned from the Republican People's Party (CHP) in 2004. However, this new movement failed to take hold after Günay joined the Justice and Development Party (AKP). In 2010, he became the deputy leader of new Islamist Party, the People's Voice Party (HAS Party) founded by Numan Kurtulmuş (he is a Vice Prime Minister of AKP government now). When the HAS Party decided to merge with the AKP in 2012, Bekaroğlu decided not to take part in the merger and resigned from the party. In September 2014, the main opponent and secular party, CHP's leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu invited Bekaroğlu to become a member of his party as part of an attempt to expand the party's appeal to conservative voters in the elections. Bekaroğlu subsequently joined the CHP and became deputy leader of the party.

and claims that there is a connection between the AKP's survival and the concept of conservative democracy in light of the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism.

I appreciate the importance of pluralism, variety and tolerance. As a requirement of my beliefs, I have set my political ideals as democracy, freedoms, tolerance, basic human rights, secularism and political participation and I know that we have to go hand in hand with other countries of the world in furthering both technologic advance and democratic values.²⁸

The above quote is from one of Erdoğan's interviews from 2002. Indeed, the AKP is concerned with creating a new public discourse according to which democratisation, accountability, civil society, and the rule of law would shape the Turkish political system and the concept of 'conservative democracy' would be helpful for reforming these areas. In its general definition, the term 'conservative democracy' highlights the compatibility of Islam with democracy, a Western-oriented foreign policy and secularism within government. The concept of conservative democracy encompasses abroad coalition of ideas. Religion is not the prominent part of this concept because the AKP prefers to call itself a '*hizmet*' (service) party rather than an ideological Islamic party. However, they need to consolidate Islamic voters and as a result did not drop the conservative idea in Turkish politics. For this reason, the AKP, in describing itself as conservative/conservative-democratic, does not need to stress its valuation of Islamic principals as well. But, as religion has an influence on most conservative thought all over the world, a steady exchange and mutual interaction should be understood as a rather normal phenomenon. Hakan Yavuz points out that the AKP was wrapped up in a number of contradictions:

It seeks to "reform" the political system and state-society relations while at the same time declaring its identity as a introduction "conservative" democracy; it champions for political participation and pluralism while at the same time the party does not allow much room for its own internal democracy; the party

²⁸<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-issues-renewed-ultimatum-to-eu.aspx?pageID=438&n=erdogan-issues-renewed-ultimatum-to-eu-2002-12-11> (Accessed 01/09/2017) Date:

identifies decentralization and local-based governance as a solution to Turkey's overburdened bureaucracy while it seeks to centralize AKP's own party structure and decision making". (Yavuz, 2006: 9-10)

Both conservatism and democracy are determining factors in exploring the AKP's identity and the concept of conservative democracy needs to create a broader coalition with regard to the political spectrum in Turkish politics. Indeed, this broad coalition idea of unifying conservatism and democracy is explained by the political survival of the AKP. De Mesquita's selectorate theory is the conceptual bridge used in this work to understand this mechanism. As mentioned in Chapter 1, selectorate theory addresses the choices that leaders make as the product of a set of calculations made by leaders to assess the best way for them to stay in power. According to De Mesquita and his colleagues, in modern mass democracies, the selectorate is the electorate and coalitions are determined by specific electoral rules. The winning coalition is often a small group of powerful selectorates who have the positions (for example, membership in a single-party system) to aspire to make and break leaders (De Mesquita and Smith, 2011: 6). Although the current socio-political changes under the AKP governance raise questions about whether or not it fits into the definition of conservative authoritarianism, Turkey has been classified as a 'democratic country' for many years. Thus, the winning coalition and selectorate should be prominent in Turkish politics in order to provide stability for the leaders' or political parties' power.

Moreover, Turkey's political, social and economic structure had been in serious crisis before the 2002 election. Indeed, the political party who would become the ruling party had to solve problems of democracy, the rule of law, economic crisis, transparency, and corruption in this election (Şarлак 2016: 297). As noted in Chapter 2, DSP-MHP-ANAP (Democratic Left Party-Nationalist Action Party-Motherland Party) coalition government between 1999 and 2002 were too close to the state and too distant from economic lobbying groups and civil society organisations (Uğur and Yankaya, 2008: 590-597). As a result, these economic lobbying groups supported the AKP due to the economic crisis in Turkey after 2001. Moreover, the AKP's

commitment to democracy, secularism, and religious pluralism made the AKP decisively different from its Islamist *Milli Görüş* party heritage. As a result of these factors, the AKP supports democratic values in Turkish politics by rejecting *Milli Görüş*'s anti-Western ideology. The anti-*Milli Görüş* perspectives of the AKP helped to create the AKP's large selectorate and winning coalition in light of the democratic consolidations in Turkish politics.

One important debate is the AKP's large winning coalition in party structure when it has been established. On 28 November 2002, the newly-formed AKP government presented its 25 cabinet members to the Turkish parliament for a vote of confidence. With eleven fewer members than the outgoing cabinet, the new cabinet represented the AKP's commitment to smaller government. In addition to six names from the Islamist Welfare Party (RP), which was banned in 1998, the cabinet includes eleven new figures, who rose in politics with the AKP. There were also six deputies formerly associated with the centrist Motherland Party (ANAP - *Anavatan Partisi*), one deputy each from centre-right True Path Party (DYP) and Nationalist Action Party (MHP - *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*), as well as a female member, Tourism Minister Güldal Akşit (Sayari, 2007: 204). This diversity is proof of the AKP's desire to form a government that represents the party's voters, ranging from Islamists to moderate liberals. Analyses of the voter base of the AKP demonstrated that the party is not a direct descendant of any of the older parties, nor do its party leaders claim such lineage. A 2002 pre-election survey showed that only 27.4%% of the AKP voters had voted for the FP in 1999, a surprisingly high 21.9%% had voted for the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Action Party (MHP), 9.2% for the centre-right ANAP, 7.3% for the centre-right True Path Party (DYP), and 6.9% for the centre-left Democratic Left Party (DSP) (Özbudun, 2014: 160). Similarly, 57%% of former FP voters, 30.5% of former MHP voters, 16.8% of former DYP voters, 16.7% of former ANAP voters, and 10.8% of former DSP voters expressed their intention to vote for the AKP in the 2002 elections (TÜSES, 2002: 70–71). The AKP seems to have received substantial support from the former voters of the two centre-right parties (ANAP and DYP) and those of the ultra-nationalist MHP, in addition to more than half of former FP voters.

Further evidence of the AKP's large winning coalition is the AKP's alliance with other groups in Turkish society and politics. Erdoğan and his colleagues were highly critical of the *Yenilikçiler* group in the *Milli Görüş* movement after the 28 February military coup and they needed to gain support from the other Islamist movements in Turkey to consolidate support from Muslim voters in the 2002 election. One of the Islamist movements in Turkey, the *Gülen* movement and its ideologists helped the AKP on this issue. One of these ideologues, Ali Bulaç²⁹ criticized both Kemalists and Islamists on the 28 February process. A central element of these criticisms against the Kemalists is that the Kemalist project has been the question of democratisation and the rule of law (Kılınç, 2014: 140). According to Bulaç and other scholars, democracy must be instituted as a constitutional framework that guarantees rights and liberties about freedom of religious practice, thought, and expression. However, Bulaç and other Gülenist ideologists thought that the *Milli Görüş* movement had not been successful in realizing these aims under the Welfare Party government (Kuru, 2007: 140-151). Bulaç declared that 'political' Islamism was dead. He called for a new 'civil' Islamism which did not contradict secularism as a political regime. Along the same lines, the influential Gülen movement abandoned its indifference and participated in the debate on secularism. As a result of this, the Journalists and Writers Foundation which is related with Gülen's movement began to organize *Abant Workshops* in order to search for a new social consensus in Turkey in light of these debates. Ahmet Kuru (2006: 136-160) points out that the younger generation of the National Outlook movement (*Milli Görüş*) which was called as *Yenilikçiler* also moved away from the Milli Görüş's ideology. Several of them have participated in the *Abant Workshops* to discuss issues such as secularism. In 2000, four leaders from this younger generation – Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdülatif Şener, Bülent Arınç, and Abdullah Gül - emphasized their pro-democratic and pro-secular ideas (Kılınç, 2014: 140-141). This alliance between the AKP's founding members and the Gülen movement highlights why the AKP was not been the continuation of the *Milli Görüş* movement and how the AKP established a large coalition in order to survive in Turkish politics.

²⁹ Ali Bulaç, Interview, Aksiyon, November 7-13, 1998; see also Ali Bulaç, "Niçin AB [Why the EU]?" Zaman, December 11, 1999. For Bulaç's pro-secular views, see Ali Bulaç, *Din, Devlet ve Demokrasi* [Religion, State, and Democracy] (Istanbul: Zaman Kitap, 2001): 11-65.

As mentioned above, the AKP passed a series of reform packages to harmonise Turkey's judicial system, civil-military relations, democratisation and human rights practices with European norms. This democratisation process on the EU's accession earned the support of Turkey's Western-style business community, liberal intellectuals and the pragmatic middle class. There is an alliance between these groups and the AKP due to the party's agenda on the EU accession process. In relation to the AKP's commitment to EU accession, one of these business organisations, TÜSİAD, supported the AKP government between 2002 and 2007 (Uğur and Yankaya, 2008: 581-601). The AKP needs to form a coalition with TÜSİAD and other Western-style economic institutions due to the fact they do not want to share the same fate as the Welfare Party. TÜSİAD and other secularist groups supported the military bureaucracy against the *Milli Görüş* movement during the 28 February process (Öniş and Türem, 2002: 451). TÜSİAD made its position on the Welfare Party very clear with an advertisement in the press and asked the two centre-right parties to ally their forces against possible Islamist involvement in the government. As a result of this situation, the AKP does not want to oppose secularist Western-style business organisations like TÜSİAD.

During the AKP's first term, the winning coalition included both domestic and external supporters, including the following: European countries and the United States, liberal intellectuals within the country, moderate Islamist groups like the Gülen movement, conservative citizens of Turkish society (as their votes determine who is to be elected in elections), centre-right voters, faith-based non-profit organisations, Western-style business institutions such as TÜSİAD, and conservative business organisations, among many others, such as MÜSİAD or TUSKON. These alliances with important sections of Turkish society helped to increase the power of the AKP in Turkish politics. Most of the AKP's founding members came from the Islamist *Milli Görüş* movement and Erdoğan and his colleagues knew that if their party continued with the *Milli Görüş*' anti-Western agenda, they could not survive in Turkish political life. De Mesquita and colleagues argue that leaders or ruling parties must satisfy large coalitions with its policy agenda in democracies. For the greater part of Turkish society, the AKP will not overstep the limits imposed by the 28 February military coup process. The AKP should assert that it is not a continuation of the *Milli Görüş*

movement and it must expand its coalition for this reason. Ebru Bulut argues that the AKP did this by;

Drawing lessons from conservative-democratic ideology, inspired by German's Christian Democracy. Traditional right-wing politicians were welcomed into the party. Emphasis was put on the party's determination to pursue economic and political relationships with Western countries. The headscarf issue was passed over in silence during the 2002 election campaign. Furthermore, during its time in government, the AKP's constant retreats concerning the secularism issue (for example about reforms of the educational system) have fostered the idea of its normalisation. Even if the headscarf issue has provoked tensions at the highest level of state, the AKP has not or cannot insist on the legalization of the veil in the university system (Bulut, 2006: 133).

Bulut's view also supports the basic argument advocated throughout the chapter. Throughout this chapter it was said that in many ways the AKP put forward liberal policies in order to survive but the AKP did not lose its conservative identity. The AKP's efforts on these issues and developments on EU accession and the democratisation process increased its power in Turkish politics. Furthermore, it also won political legitimacy in the eyes of the military. However, the AKP needed a new concept in order to implement these policies in light of the Muslim voters' support. At a conservative congress organised by the party in 2004, Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat, the late vice-president of the party, defined conservative democracy as a "synthesis of conservatism and democracy that connects traditional Turkish values with elements of European conservatism".³⁰ The creation of the term 'conservative democracy' - instead of using 'democracy' alone - was doubly advantageous for the party. By choosing the adjective 'conservative', it assigns itself – not least in the international context - to an established ideology. Concerning Turkey, it positions itself in amongst approved conservative actors. Moreover, the term 'conservative democracy' allows the party to establish its own discourse within conservative

³⁰ Fırat, Dengir Mir Mehmet, "Kapanış Konuşması", Uluslararası Muhafazakarlık ve Demokrasi Sempozyumu, 10./11.01.2004 İstanbul, www.akparti.org.tr/siyasivehukuk/dokuman/KonusmaDengirBey%20UMDP.doc, (Accessed Date: 01/01/2017)

discourse. The message to the public (and the voter) is that of a new political beginning without losing its connection to the past.

Overall, the AKP's identity in its establishment process and during its first term between 2002 and 2007 has been explained using two main elements, 'conservatism' and 'democracy'. Conservatism was useful in consolidating Muslim voters' support in the 2002 election against the *Milli Görüş's* Felicity Party. Democracy was used to create the AKP's coalition with a broad spectrum of Turkish society to ensure its survival in Turkish politics as a political actor. Both concepts - conservatism and democracy - have been merged due to the heavy pressure against Muslims in Turkey after the 28 February process. As a result of this, both liberals and conservatives in Turkey supported to the AKP in the 2002 Election.

The main argument of this chapter is that the AKP's legitimisation of its conservative identity is a precondition for its own political survival. One interviewee, Mustafa Balbay, agrees this view. Balbay was arrested on 5 March 2009 as an *Ergenekon* suspect in the *Odatv* case - which is related to the clash between the Kemalist/military bureaucracy and the AKP - and in August 2009 he was sentenced to 34 years and eight months in prison. Mustafa Balbay was elected as a parliamentary deputy for the Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) even though he has been in prison in June 2011 election. Following the changes in Turkish law, he has been released and is now a parliamentary member of CHP in the Turkish Assembly. Balbay does not think that the AKP's Islamist origins have been changed. He claims that if the AKP had tried to become more Islamist in 2003 or 2004, there would have been a huge reaction from the Turkish public and international actors against Erdoğan's government. He uses the metaphor of a boiling frog: 'If you tossed a frog into already-boiling water, it would leap out. But a frog placed into a pan of water with a low flame under it will slowly be boiled alive, the temperature change being too subtle for the frog to notice. The AKP has used the same method in order to raise its power and there is no resistance against the AKP'.³¹ Balbay's metaphor explains why

³¹ Interview with Mustafa Balbay in Ankara- 1st December 2015

the AKP did not become an Islamist party when it established in 2001 in light of the AKP's political survival.

8. Conclusion

Based on the use of empirical evidence from elite interviews, party documents, public speeches, and developments and changes in the AKP's policies this thesis argues that there are four independent variables within the AKP's four terms as analysed in Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5, the first being the legitimising of the AKP's conservative identity (2002-2007).

As seen in all these debates and explanations about the AKP's establishment process and the AKP's first term between 2002 and 2007, participants have explained two common points. First, the AKP could not identify itself as a purely Islamist party due to its founding members, establishment principles, the importance of the 28 February process, the lessons from *Milli Görüş*' failure, the concept of conservative democracy, and other similar explanatory reasons. Second, the alliance or good relations between the United States and other Western powers like European Union during the AKP's establishment and first term played a prominent role in explaining the AKP's popularity in international affairs. This alliance had many advantages for both sides and this process was an important factor in legitimising the AKP's conservatism in Turkish politics.

Overall, Chapter 2 explores how the legitimising of the AKP's conservatism is a pre-condition for ensuring AKP's political survival. It is an important time-period for showing the AKP's progression in Turkish democracy and for understanding the legitimisation of its conservative identity. On the one hand, there are important internal factors during the AKP's founding such as its attitude to political concepts like conservative democracy and other events such as the 28 February coup (soft coup).

On the other hand, there are external factors such as the increasing support of the United States and Western countries in the international context of 9/11.

This chapter aims to show the impact of these internal and external factors for understanding the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism in relation to debates about AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. This legitimisation process is related to the AKP's winning coalition and its political survival as outlined in De Mesquita's selectorate theory. Following Chapter 2, Chapter 3 focuses on the second term of AKP rule between 2007 and 2011 in light of the AKP's power struggle.

Chapter 3: The Second Term of the AKP's rule (2007-11): The Power Struggle Between AKP and Kemalist Secular Elites

1. Introduction

All papers report Prime Minister Erdoğan and the main opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal lashed out at each other during their party group meetings in the parliament over the 'Ergenekon' investigation. Baykal told his party group the prosecutor's case in the Ergenekon probe appeared to be similar to an indictment which had been filed by Prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya on the Şemdinli incident (in which, in November 2005, two military officers were caught red-handed bombing a bookstore in the town of Şemdinli in the border province of Hakkari in southeast Turkey). He claimed a "false atmosphere" was created in the country before the indictment was unveiled. Baykal also slammed the prosecutor for "shaping the charges after finding some suspects." He also demanded evidence linking the Ergenekon suspects -- retired generals, daily Cumhuriyet editors İlhan Selçuk and Mustafa Balbay, and Ankara Chamber of Commerce president Sinan Aygun -- to the attack on the Council of State. "If there is no evidence, you should step down at once," stressed Baykal. Baykal said Erdoğan was acting as a prosecutor in the Ergenekon lawsuit, adding, he thus had to play the role of attorney. Erdoğan, in reply, told his party group yesterday, "'I'm glad Baykal calls me the prosecutor of the case, because prosecutors are there for the people. Our main concern is to defend the rights of people." Erdoğan added Turkish people were fully aware of which party was standing in defense of the Ergenekon suspects and which against them.³²

This debate between Prime Minister Erdoğan and the pro-secular CHP's (Republican Peoples Party) leader Deniz Baykal, was one of the most popular news stories in Turkey during the *Ergenekon* case in July 2008. The *Ergenekon* case was

³²<http://www.gazetevatan.com/-evet-ergenekon-un-savcisiyim--189246-siyaset/> (Accessed 01/09/2017) Date:

one of the biggest in recent Turkish history, pitting Erdoğan's supporters in the Islamist-rooted AKP against the secularist military establishment.

Following the first term of the AKP's rule outlined in Chapter 2, Chapter 3 focuses on the second term between 2007 and 2011. This term is crucial to scrutinise how the AKP government began to change position since its establishment in 2001. There are some developments that demonstrate the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics. At this point, De Mesquita's theory remains valid. According to De Mesquita, leaders or political parties follow politics to narrow down coalitions to fend off threats to their political survival. However, they should keep a large nominal selectorate and gain the support of the mass vote. When the AKP struggled against the Kemalist bureaucracy, it had to propagate an even more Islamic line to keep the support of conservative voters in the elections. This policy change was a condition for the survival of the AKP. However, the party was supported by liberals, due to the decrease in military powers in Turkish democracy, who believed that the AKP was fighting secular opponents to improve egalitarianism. As a result, the real breaking point of the AKP's anti-democratic governance occurred after the 2011 election. This chapter explores the first steps of the clashes between AKP and opponents, framed within the AKP's political survival dynamics. The AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites was a condition for the survival of the AKP and it became the second independent variable of the AKP's political survival. This argument is supported by empirical evidence from elite interviews, the AKP's policy documents, changes in the AKP's party structure, the documents of the constitutional clashes between the AKP and Kemalist elites, legal changes in Turkish politics, public speeches by the AKP's politicians, and other documentary sources cited throughout Chapter 3.

2. The Beginning of the Clash Between the AKP and Kemalist Secular Elites

De Mesquita and his colleagues (De Mesquita, Morrow, Siverson and Smith, 2002: 559-590) indicate that political succession, or rather its avoidance, is at the

heart of the decisions leaders make. Except for the rare incumbent who voluntarily steps down, leaders overwhelmingly act as if they want to hold on to power for as long as they possibly can. Unfortunately, for them, they face numerous threats to their tenure. In addition to the normal give-and-take of everyday politics, leaders risk deposition through coups or mass uprisings such as revolutions and civil wars. De Mesquita and Smith demonstrate that the threat of military coups is one of the important risks for the survival of leaders (De Mesquita and Smith, 2009: 167-197)

Although the AKP legitimized its position in internal and external actors' eyes with the EU accession and democratisation processes during its first term, there were serious concerns from the Kemalist military bureaucracy about the AKP's identity and agenda. One important journalist who works on Erdoğan's leadership and the *Milli Görüş* movement, Ruşen Çakır, indicates there has been a real transformation in Erdoğan, but the problem is that it is not enough for the Kemalist elites and military powers (Çakır and Çalmuk, 2001). This research claims that the real problem for the Kemalist and military bureaucracy is their loss of power in Turkish politics. The AKP has overseen many improvements through the EU accession and democratisation processes. Western countries and Western-style business organisations and liberals began to support the AKP due to its efforts on Europeanisation and democratisation. Although these actors collaborated with the Kemalist military powers against the *Milli Görüş* movement during the 28 February process, the situation was reversed during the first term of the AKP government (Çınar, 2016: 16-19). Interestingly, Kemalist elites began to criticize the EU accession process alongside Erbakan's *Milli Görüş* movement. Larabee and Rabasa explain this shift between these political actors as follows:

In the past, the Kemalists were the main proponents of close ties to the West and Western integration. In recent years, however, this role has increasingly been assumed by the AKP. Ironically, as the AKP has pressed forward with reforms designed to bring Turkey into conformity with EU norms and regulations, some sectors in the Kemalist establishment have begun to worry that EU membership and further democratisation could undermine Turkish security, as well as their own political role (Larabee and Rabasa, 2008: 98).

The AKP's staff and Erdoğan were aware of the military/Kemalist elites' concerns about them. As discussed before, the AKP had been very careful about sensitive issues such as the headscarf due to its political survival. However, there were some policy proposals from the AKP government which did not help the perception of party's ideology such as its efforts in 2005 to outlaw adultery, the attempts by some mayors to create alcohol-free zones, the policy of creating loopholes to allow students at *imam hatip* schools (religious schools) to transfer to academic high schools before graduation, thus granting them preferential treatment when going on to non-theology majors in university (Ifantis, 2009: 128). Nevertheless, these attempts did not succeed and most of them had not been implemented during the first term of the AKP up to 2007. Indeed, the AKP discovered the use of human rights and democracy discourses as a means of protecting itself from authoritarian Kemalists and the advantages of speaking the language of democracy and human rights helped to enable the party to communicate with Western countries. As a result, the West has emerged as an ally of the AKP rather than the Kemalists or military powers.

One of the interviews of this research was conducted with Suat Kınıklioğlu³³ and aimed to explore the conflict between the AKP and Kemalist elites. Kınıklioğlu³⁴ claims that the Kemalist's criticisms of the AKP's 'hidden agenda' are not totally correct. According to Kınıklioğlu, the EU accession process was one of the most important agendas of the AKP's foreign policy in their first term. He argues that EU institutions instilled a discipline in the AKP. However, following Sarkozy's election as French president in 2006, Turkey's EU accession process was slowed down due to Merkel's and Sarkozy's opposition to it. After these developments, Cyprus' EU

³³ Kınıklioğlu is a Turkish politician, writer and analyst. Kınıklioğlu began his political career in 1995-1996 with the Democratic Left Party (DSP) in Ankara. Following a break in politics Kınıklioğlu was elected as Member of Parliament representing *Çankırı* in the general election of 22 July 2007 on a Justice and Development Party. Kınıklioğlu was member of the executive board of the AK Party (2009-2012), deputy chairman of external affairs (2007-2011), spokesman of the foreign affairs committee in the Turkish Parliament (2007-2011), chairman of the Turkey-USA Interparliamentary Friendship Group. As seen in Kınıklioğlu's profile, although he does not come from the *Milli Görüş* or Islamist movements' heritage, he took on important tasks in the AKP staff during the second term between 2007 and 2011.

³⁴ Interview with Suat Kınıklioğlu- Ankara/ 16th November 2015.

accession undermined the AKP's discipline in terms of the democratisation process. Kınıklioğlu points out that the AKP changed its political position from conservative democracy to authoritarianism. Kınıklioğlu accepts the first steps of the AKP's authoritarianism in this period but there are reasons why the general public were not aware of this phenomenon. One million protesters marched in the centre of Ankara and protested against the possibility of Prime Minister Erdoğan or any other member of the Justice and Development Party standing in the 2007 presidential elections. Kınıklioğlu argues that these protestors do not want to have a good relationship with the United States or European Union and the AKP tried to prevent the threat of Turkey's marginalisation in international affairs during this clash. At the same time, this picture given by Kınıklioğlu was also a great advantage in legitimising the AKP's conservative identity. Kınıklioğlu says that the AKP is one of the more useful examples for the international actors in light of 9/11 and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. He argues that the military bureaucracy planned to take action against the AKP government after 2007. Kınıklioğlu's views support De Mesquita's argument on risks to political survival as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Like Kınıklioğlu, Alev Özkazanç thinks that the military coup was planned against the AKP government. Some illegal organisations like *Ergenekon* planned to engage in assassinations and cause chaos in society in order to overthrow the government. Özkazanç argues that some parts of society - like the military bureaucracy and the Kemalists - saw the AKP as 'illegitimate'. Another academic, Alev Çınar,³⁵ says that 'one of the best policies for the AKP's government is the fight against military elites in order to reduce its power in Turkish politics'.³⁶

As previously indicated in De Mesquita's selectorate theory, leaders or political parties may face multiple risks or political threats to their political survival. In fact, the AKP has encountered two important threats since 2007. This chapter attempts to

³⁵ Çınar is the Professor at the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University. Her research interests include the relations between politics, nation-hood and nationalism; state and nation-building practices; the public sphere; modernity, Islam and secularism in Turkey.

³⁶ Interview with Alev Çınar- Ankara/ 28th November 2015

evaluate how these threats are realized and examine the AKP's reactions to these threats with regards to the AKP's political survival.

2.1. 2007 Presidential Election

The Kemalist and military bureaucracy stands against the AKP government as they believe that the AKP has a hidden agenda to establish a state which is regulated by Islamic Law. According to them, the AKP is an Islamist Party and will be a serious threat to secularism in Turkey. On this issue, there are two important developments that took place before and after the 2007 General Election in terms of the AKP's history. The first was the E-Momerandum created by the military on 27 April 2007.

Before this election, the military/Kemalist powers' concerns about the AKP government mounted after Yaşar Büyükanıt's selection as Chief of the General Staff. In one of his speeches in early October 2006, Büyükanıt said the country faced an Islamist threat that must be tackled, adding his voice to a growing chorus of secularist warnings (Balci, 2015: 67-94). Other key members of the military, İlker Başbuğ and secularist President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, issued similar public warnings about Islamists, though Erdoğan denied any threat to Turkish secularism (Shambayati and Sütçü: 2012: 112). Furthermore, Başbuğ and Büyükanıt upheld the army's role as the defender of Turkish secularism despite European Union criticisms that it should stay out of politics. The roles of Kemalists and Islamists have been changed in light of the Europeanisation process. Ifantis points out that 'secularism and liberal democracy are not viewed by the Kemalist establishment as necessarily complementary, as they are in West' (Ifantis, 2007: 18). The military's role is as guardians of the secular state, but it occupies the paradoxical position of 'safeguarding' democracy while at the same time being a major impediment to Turkey's real democratisation (Heper and Güney, 1996: 623). Doğan Güreş, Chief of General Staff from December 1990 to August 1994, pointed out that in Turkey the duties of the military include 'safeguarding the modernistic and secular features of the Turkish republic... (and) defending the country against its internal and external enemies' (Heper, 2011: 241).

With the rise of the *Milli Görüş* movement in the 1990s, the military bureaucracy would emphasize that the armed forces are the natural guardians of secularism from the legacy of the late-Ottoman and early Republican periods (Narlı, 2000: 119-120). However, after the AKP came to power, the process did not become like the 1990s. As mentioned in Chapter 2, international actors did not support the Welfare Party during the 28 February 1997 military coup. The AKP, which has proven that it is not a continuation of the Welfare Party, was supported by external actors such as EU during the struggle with Kemalist military powers between 2007 and 2011 (Bardakçı, 2013: 411-428).

The 2007 Presidential Election was the first struggle between the AKP and the Kemalist elites. The main problem for Kemalists and the military powers is the possibility of a president coming from an Islamist tradition, with a wife wearing the Islamic headscarf. Parliamentary speaker and one of the AKP's founding members, Bülent Arınç, said such objections are aimed at electing a civilian, religious and democratic president (Dinçşahin, 2012: 629). Arınç's declarations increased the polarisation between secularism and Islamism in Turkish society. A sea of flag-waving demonstrators poured onto the streets of Istanbul, Ankara and elsewhere to protest the possible presidential candidacy of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

On 14 April 2007, two days before the start of nominations for the presidential elections³⁷, over one million protesters marched in the centre of Ankara chanting slogans such as 'Turkey is secular, and it will remain secular', and 'We do not want an imam for President' to protest against the possibility of Prime Minister Erdoğan or another member of the Justice and Development Party standing in the presidential elections (Polat, 2008: 137). However, the AKP government's Foreign Minister's - Abdullah Gül - candidacy for the Turkish presidential elections was announced by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. After Abdullah Gül's candidacy, most people in Turkey awaited the Armed Forces' position on the election. Since Turkey's presidential office is regarded as the guardian of the country's secular system, the fact that Gül's wife

³⁷ The opposition party, CHP boycotted the first round of Presidential Election in April 2017.

wears the Islamic headscarf, as well as his own history in political Islam turned the elections into a political crisis (Jenkins, 2008: 6-7).

The E-memorandum is a controversial General Staff statement released on its website in 27 April 2007 weighing in on the Turkish presidential elections of 2007. Turkey's army warned against questioning the country's secular system after a disputed first-round presidential vote in parliament (Grigoriadis, 2009: 1205). It stated that:

The problem that emerged in the presidential election process is focused on arguments over secularism. The Turkish Armed Forces are concerned about the recent situation. ... the Turkish Armed Forces are a party in those arguments, and absolute defender of secularism. Also, the Turkish Armed Forces is definitely opposed to those arguments and negative comments. It will display its attitude and action openly and clearly whenever it is necessary (Tambar, 2009: 527).

This E-memorandum signalled the start of the 28 February coup process. However, the AKP government did not react against that e-memorandum in the same way as *Milli Görüş's* Welfare Party. In response to these statements, government spokesman Cemil Çiçek made a speech and said that the General Staff 'remains under the Prime Minister's orders. It is inconceivable that, in a democratic State of law, the general staff (...) should make such remarks', he pointed out, reaffirming the government's commitment to secular principles (Eligür, 2007: 2). As seen in this speech, the AKP did not want to make the same mistakes as the Welfare Party government because the EU and Western powers had supported the AKP during this clash due to its improvements on the EU accession and democratisation processes.

During this debate, the opposition Republican Peoples' Party (CHP) applied to the Constitutional Court seeking the annulment of the first round of voting. Many scholars argue that the 27 April E-Memorandum by armed forces should also be seen as a message to the judges in the Constitutional Court to declare the vote

invalid and dissolve parliament (Gümüşçü and Sert, 2009: 960). As a result, on 1 May 2007, the Constitutional Court declared that the parliamentary election process of the new president must be halted on the grounds that the initiation of the election process had violated the constitutional procedures stated in the standing orders of the Grand Assembly (Özdemir, 2012: 49). This decision caused a political crisis. The AKP used this crisis and, after unsuccessful attempts to restart the presidential election rounds, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called for an early general election. Under these circumstances, the AKP went to early elections on 22 July 2007 and won a sweeping victory, increasing its share of the vote from 34% to 46.6% (Yılmaz, 2009: 53-64). Between the 2002 and 2007 parliamentary elections, the AKP increased its electoral base from nearly 10 million votes to some 16 million (Çarkoğlu, 2007: 512). This research argues that the presidential election crisis, the failure to elect a president in the first and second round, and the intervention of the military in this election affected the 2007 General Election. Indeed, the AKP successfully campaigned for right-wing voters, who were disturbed by the slogans of the Kemalist demonstrations not to allow a religious person to become the country's president. This victimization of the AKP served the party well and was a contributing factor to its election.

The voting survey which was conducted by the research organisation KONDA after the elections on July 22, 2007, was evidence supporting this argument. For example, one of the questions asked to the respondents after the election; 'Would you agree that in some cases the elected politicians should be replaced by the military regime?' While the percentage of those who answered NO to this question was 62%, 70% of the voters who voted for the AKP in the elections gave a NO answer to this question. Again, the issues of secularism and religious values that have begun to clash with Kemalism are in another question. A total of 64% of the respondents answered YES to the question of 'Should the state support the development of the religious beliefs of our citizens?', while 66% of the AKP voters say YES. These data are also an example of the fact that the General Staff's e-military coup attempt and the crisis in the presidential election are events that the AKP can use them for consolidating the voters in this election. Çarkoğlu summarizes this situation as follows;

At the outset of the electoral campaign, the expectation was that the presidential election debaucher threats to secularism would be used intensively by the parties. However, both issues were very divisive. The debate about threats to secularism and the protest meetings had the potential to alienate conservative circles. The presidential election issue could only help the AKP win votes by claiming that they were the wronged underdogs. The MHP and the DP, who were both trying to appeal to the AKP's conservative constituency, did not dare touch these issues much. Remaining isolated on this matter, the CHP campaign was ineffective in expanding its vote on the basis of these issues. (Çarkoğlu, 2007:501-519)

Despite the AKP's victory in the 2007 General Election, it did not gain the two-thirds majority needed to elect a president. However, the other main opposition party, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP), announced its decision not to boycott the elections. As a result, Abdullah Gül was elected as the eleventh President of the Turkish Republic. After the 2007 Presidential Election, Erdoğan and his government were met with an obstacle from the Kemalist bureaucracy and judiciary (Dağı, 2008. 25-26).

2.2. The AKP's Closure Trial

After the defeat of the military coup threat in the 2007 election victory, the second-most important of the AKP's battles came in the form of its own closure trial. The real threat confronting the AKP from the beginning of Prime Minister Erdoğan's second term was not the direct intervention of the military, but rather the decision by the judiciary to close down the party. On 14 March 2008, the Public Prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya, forwarded a 162-page indictment to the Constitutional Court, requesting the closure of the AKP (Yılmaz, 2009: 19). Supreme Court of Appeals Chief Prosecutor, Abdurrahman Yalçinkaya, requested the closure of the AKP and a ban on 71 of its highest-level officials from engaging in politics for five years, including President Gül (a former AKP member) and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Yalçinkaya, 2008: 191-194). Yalçinkaya's indictment claimed that

'all actions and rhetoric of the AKP is aimed at establishing an Islamic society in which Islamic rules and values have priority... and then carrying out legal arrangements to move toward Shariah' (Topal, 2012: 8-10).

It cited as evidence speeches and statements from President Gül, Prime Minister Erdoğan, and other AKP officials. Some authors, like Dağı (2008), Grigoriadis (2009) and Keyman (2010), criticize Yalçinkaya's indictment heavily. According to them, this indictment does not have sufficient evidence to prove the AKP's anti-secular activities. Indeed, Yalçinkaya's claims focused on the headscarf debate. Before this trial, the AKP had tried to lift the headscarf ban in education with constitutional amendments and this debate played a prominent role during the AKP's closure trial (Lancaster, 2014, p.1682). This research claims that, this case is the second attempt of Kemalist elites against the AKP government but they had not been successful on this issue. The closure request failed by one vote, as only six out of eleven judges ruled in favour, with seven required. However, ten out of eleven judges agreed that the AKP had become 'a centre for anti-secular activities', leading to a loss of state funding for the party (Özbudun, 2012: 46).

It is perceived that these threats will cause the AKP to alter its outlook, especially towards the Kemalists and secular elites. As discussed in Chapter 1, according to De Mesquita's selectorate theory, political survival can be threatened in some distinct ways. These include domestic challenges to the leadership or military coup attempts. Following the military coup attempt of 27 April 2007, the AKP faced domestic challenges in the closure trial. This is evident from the reduction of the military's power in Turkish politics with the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* investigations and the destruction of the Kemalists' judicial power with the 2010 constitutional amendments. This chapter will initially focus on these two reactions in order to indicate how they contribute to the causal mechanism between AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites and the AKP's political survival. These two threats to the survival of the AKP would lead the AKP to open a new field of struggle with the Kemalist elite. This struggle would also manifest itself as the protecting of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics.

3. The AKP's Reactions against Kemalist Secular Elites

3.1. *Ergenekon and Balyoz (Sledgehammer) Investigations*

As discussed above, De Mesquita and his colleagues focus on the threats leaders face like military coup attempt or other similar issues in order to survive in politics. Erdoğan became more aware these risks after the military's E-memorandum and the AKP's closure trial initiated by the Kemalist judiciary. The AKP government under the Erdoğan's leadership avoided opposing the military due to lessons it had learned from the fate of the Welfare Party. As such, they had to be careful about sensitive issues like the headscarf or other similar Islamic matters during the first term of the AKP. However, these attempts by military Kemalist elites changed the AKP's position and its huge winning coalition in the second term of the AKP.

The first important events of the AKP's policy transformation were the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases against the military elite and the Kemalist section of the Turkish media and academia. One of the important cases that dominated the agenda of 2008, a year full of legal processes, was the so-called *Ergenekon* operation. Although the investigation was launched in 2007, the operation and the process accelerated and gained pace throughout the year. More than 100 people were subsequently charged with forming an illegal organisation which provoked a series of incidents that would pave the way for a military coup (Kurt and Toktaş, 2010: 397). Two retired generals, some former army officers, journalists and academics were among those included in the allegations (Balcı, 2010: 92). As noted above, Erdoğan supported this investigation and accepted the claim of his prosecutor's position for this case.

However, this investigation demonstrates the transformation from conservative democracy to the rise of Islamism and authoritarianism under AKP rule in light of the many problems with the rule of law in this case. In my fieldwork, one of the participants, Suat Kınıklıoğlu, a prominent member of the AKP between 2002 and

2007, mentioned Gareth Jenkins' report about the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases. According to Kınıklıoğlu, although the military bureaucracy planned to take action against the AKP government after 2007, this plan was not put into practice. He discusses that the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases have many problematic issues in terms of the rule of law due to this reason. Following the arrest of journalists like Nedim Şener and Ahmet Şık³⁸, he began to think about the reliability of these cases. Kınıklıoğlu indicates that the AKP's authoritarian process started in these years but he and his liberal colleagues were not aware of this issue due to the clash between the Kemalist bureaucracy and the AKP.

Kınıklıoğlu claims that the AKP and he did not pay attention to Jenkins' report. Gareth Jenkins is a non-Resident Senior Research Fellow with the Joint Centre's Silk Road Studies Programme and Turkey Initiative. He is a writer and analyst based in Istanbul, where he has been a resident since 1989. His special fields of interest are civil-military relations, the Kurdish issue, terrorism, security issues, and political Islam. The important point for Jenkins is that he is one of the researchers who read the whole *Ergenekon* indictment. Following his reading he wrote a report about this case, *Between Fact and Fantasy: Turkey's Ergenekon Investigation*. Jenkins noted in this report:

In fact, there is no proof that the Ergenekon organisation as described in the indictments exists or has ever existed. Indeed, the indictments are so full of contradictions, rumors, speculation, misinformation, illogical ties, absurdities and untruths that they are not even internally consistent or coherent (Jenkins, 2011: 11).

Bill Park (2009) also highlights Jenkins' numerous judicial flaws surrounding the *Ergenekon* case: 1) the "evidence" often amounts to little more than hearsay and

³⁸ Since early 2011 it is the centre of the *Odatv* case of the *Ergenekon* trials, with *Odatv* accused of being the "media arm" of the *Ergenekon* organisation. The indictment accuses the defendants to be founders, leaders, members or supporters of the "armed terror organisation *Ergenekon*", to have incited to hatred and enmity, to have obtained secret documents etc. Ahmet Şık and Nedim Şener, neither of whom worked for *Odatv*, are charged with supporting *Ergenekon*.

is full of contradictions and inconsistencies; 2) a majority of the suspects seem guilty of little other than opposition to the AKP government; 3) the circumstances of many of the detentions are illegal; 4) the police raids have themselves not been carried out with due process; 5) there has been extensive and illegal leaking of information to the pro-government media.

As seen in the *Ergenekon* case, Erdoğan and the AKP government began to fight against the Kemalist/military elites by illicit means. The second pillar of this struggle is the *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) investigation which was launched in 2010. A total of 331 serving and retired members of the military were convicted in the *Balyoz* trial due to planning a coup at a military seminar in Istanbul on 5-7 March 2003. However, this case has many problematic issues due to the claims of this seminar meeting in 2003. Jenkins (2014: 1-2) points out that the metadata on the CD appeared to show that the documents containing the coup plot had been last saved on 5 March 2003 and were not subsequently amended. However, not only did the documents contain numerous anachronisms, contradictions and absurdities, but forensic analysis showed that they had been written using Microsoft Office 2007, the beta version of which was not available until 2006 (Martin, 2015: 169-200).

The Kurdish Islamist politicians who supported the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* investigations within the AKP's struggle against the Kemalist/military bureaucracy in the AKP's second term argue why the AKP's this power struggle was unsuccessful. One of these politicians is Ayhan Bilgen³⁹, a Kurdish Islamist writer and politician. He claims that the decrease of military powers in Turkish politics should be the most important goal for political parties in Turkey and the AKP was successful in achieving this. However, this achievement has existed entirely to bring about the AKP's own Islamist and authoritarian governance according to Bilgen. Bilgen says that 'if the AKP were sincere about democratisation and civilisation, it would continue to change the other anti-democratic bureaucratic institutions like the Higher Education Council

³⁹ Bilgen is a headperson of Islamist human rights organisation *Mazlum-Der* between in the 2000s. Following of this, he joined the People's Democracy Party (HDP) in 2014 and he elected as a deputy of HDP in June 2015 Election. He was a spokesperson of HDP. He has been arrested as part of a terror probe on January 2017.

(YÖK) or the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*).⁴⁰ However, Bilgen cannot see the AKP paying attention to these issues.

Another Islamist Kurdish politician, Adem Geveri, focused on the AKP's agenda during the clash between the military and Erdoğan's government. Geveri was the General Secretary of the Islamist Movement (*Azadi Initiative*) until 2014. In 2014, he joined the HDP and was elected as a deputy in the 2015 election. Geveri explains that the AKP's real goal is not to reduce the military/Kemalist bureaucracy's power in Turkish political life - Erdoğan and his colleagues simply tried to control the military forces in order to gain their support. De Mesquita's selectorate theory runs parallel to Geveri's view at this point. According to De Mesquita, leaders or political parties who eliminate threats start to form their own cliques. After the AKP deactivated Kemalist soldiers, it created a new military bureaucracy that had a close relationship with the AKP government. Moreover, Geveri claims that the support of the EU and the United States on this issue helped the AKP to dominate the armed forces. He argues that 'this is not success for democracy, only for the AKP'.⁴¹

Like Kurdish Islamist politicians, some liberal/secular academics supported the AKP against military or secular elites. One of them was Professor Alev Özkazanç from Ankara University. She is a specialist on women's and gender issues in Turkey in relation to Turkish political and social history. She does not agree that the *Ergenekon* case and the military interventions against the AKP government were not totally unrealistic. She says that she realised the military's coup was a plan against the AKP government.⁴² Some illegal organisations like *Ergenekon* planned to engage in assassinations and cause chaos in society in order to overthrow the government. Özkazanç believes that some parts of society, like the military bureaucracy or the Kemalists, saw the AKP as 'illegitimate' and the AKP needed to fight against these groups. However, the AKP has complicated this issue within the concept of civilisation and democratisation. After 2011, according to Özkazanç, there were also some challenges to Turkey's democracy under the Erdoğan regime.

⁴⁰ Interview with Ayhan Bilgen- Ankara/ 1st December 2015

⁴¹ Interview with Adem Geveri- Ankara/ 24th November 2015

⁴² Interview with Alev Özkazanç-Ankara / 27th October 2015

One of the other liberal academics interviewed as part of this study is İhsan Dağı,⁴³ who supported the AKP during their second term. Dağı argues that although the AKP made several improvements in terms of democracy and human rights prior to 2007, its attempts to dominate the military have not receded. The military did not accept the democratisation process due to its belief in the AKP's hidden agenda. However, Dağı does not claim that the AKP has a hidden agenda to establish an Islamist state in Turkey. He says that if the AKP has a hidden agenda, it is not possible to realise it with the EU accession process because the process has changed the economic and social structure of Turkish politics. The interview asked a burning question to Dağı: how we can understand the AKP's shift and the rise of Islamism? According to Dağı, the AKP develops a step-by-step strategy for survival in Turkish politics.⁴⁴

Another supporter of the AKP's struggle against Kemalist domination of the military is Alev Çınar. Çınar is a Professor at the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University. Çınar says that 'one of the best policies for the AKP government is the fight against military elites in order to reduce its power in Turkish politics'.⁴⁵ She does not agree that these clashes and the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* investigations are unrealistic and argues that they are important for democratic consolidation in Turkey. However, the main problem for Çınar is that there are serious concerns for the right to a fair trial these cases as well as the prolonged pre-trial detention of some defendants, which have overshadowed the important contribution of these efforts to combat the impunity of the military, according to Human Rights Watch's 2013 Report.

The other important explanation to understand the power struggle between the AKP and the Kemalist bureaucracy is the centre-periphery theory. The group

⁴³ İhsan Dağı is an associate professor of international relations at Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, where he teaches courses on the place of human rights in international relations and the identity politics of Islamists.

⁴⁴ Interview with İhsan Dağı- Ankara/ 22nd December 2015

⁴⁵ Interview with Alev Çınar- Ankara/ 28th November 2015

interviews with students from Middle East Technical University (METU)⁴⁶ explain that the AKP-Erdoğan connection is based on using Mardin's interpretation of the centre-periphery theory in the Turkish case. According to Mardin's perspective, the Turkish attempt to bring about modernisation through Westernisation has not been supported by the masses in Turkey.

Mardin (1973: 170-171) applies the terms 'centre' and 'periphery' to Ottoman society and reaches the conclusion that this society consisted of city dwellers, including the Sultan and his officials and nomads. The centre included city dwellers while the periphery consisted of nomads. The integration of the centre and the periphery was not achieved (Berktaş and Farouqi, 2016: 202). For the rise of the *ulema* elites in the empire after the sixteenth century, Sunni Orthodox Islam represented the centre against the Sufi-heterodox Islam traditionally represented in the religious elements of the periphery (Mardin, 1973: 171). These two societal characteristics, namely the existence of the centre and periphery, and the absence of their successful integration, also existed in modern Turkish society and remains as the major duality in Turkey (Jung, 2006: 117-137). Moreover, Mardin argues the gap between centre and periphery continued during the process of Kemalist modernisation.

Mardin claims that this modernity process failed to win the hearts of Muslim people in Turkey due to the state repression and the abuse of power by Westernising bureaucrats (Mardin, 1973). They also regard the AKP's success as a historic victory of the periphery over the centre. In this context, the periphery is the cultural and political territory of the oppressed and marginalised majority - or put simply, the site of civil society - while the centre is the place of the state, the power of which is in the hands of a secular military-civil bureaucracy. This view claims that Erdoğan has taken the periphery's support due to his lower-class mythology. One of my interviewees stated that although Erdoğan has a nationalist character, Kurdish

⁴⁶ The Political Science Student Club of the METU invited me to join their roundtable discussion about Islam and the AKP. A great majority of these students came from the Politics and International Relations Department.

people support him due to his struggle against the Kemalist state bureaucracy.⁴⁷ Çiçek (2016: 155) says that, the Kurds were struggling against the traditional state apparatus dominated by Kemalist cadres. The AKP has reached a serious level of support, especially among the Islamist Kurds with this struggle. Despite differences between the various Kurdish pro-Islamist groups, it is obvious that Islam constitutes the predominant frame of reference for their social consciousness. For most of the Kurds supporting the AKP, its pro-Islamist outlook is the most important reason behind their support (Çiçek, 2013: 159-162). However, Kurds no longer support Erdogan after 2015 as he did not keep his promises towards them. Bill Park (2016: 463-464) states that, some reforms were introduced but the AKP government appeared inactive and increasingly insincere after 2015. Although the ceasefire partially held, sporadic violent incidents still occurred. Turkish security forces in the region were increased and their infrastructure improved.

On the one hand, the Islamist Kurds and liberals supported the AKP, thinking that the AKP's democratisation will come from the struggle with Kemalism. On the other hand, the Kemalists and nationalists have argued that this struggle of the AKP is completely pragmatic. The fieldwork conducted other interesting interviews with the nationalist politician Mevlüt Karakaya⁴⁸ about these matters. According to Karakaya, the AKP used this struggle as a tool of victimisation rather than democratisation. Erdoğan and the AKP's policy in these cases is pragmatist and uses religious discourse to appeal to conservative voters in the elections. Karakaya⁴⁹ argues that the AKP always benefited from this discourse before the 2007 and 2011 general elections in Turkey and one of the best-known examples of this is the 2007 Presidential election. He argues that *Ergenekon*, *Balyoz* and other cases became the AKP's tools with which to manipulate and consolidate voters. This chapter concentrates on the AKP's power struggle with the Kemalist elite, which is the second intervening variable of the causal mechanism between the survival of the

⁴⁷ Group meeting with METU Political Science Student Group- Ankara/9th December 2015

⁴⁸ Mevlüt Karakaya is a Turkish politician from the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), who has served as a Member of Parliament for Adana since 7 June 2015. He also briefly worked at the World Bank between 1997 and 1998. He has taught at Gazi University, Hacettepe University, İzmir University of Economics as well as Başkent University. Having been active as a MHP member and serving as a member of the Party Executive Board for 10 years, he was appointed Deputy Leader of the MHP on 19 June 2011 with responsibilities for party finance.

⁴⁹ Interview with Mevlüt Karakaya- Ankara/23 November 2015.

AKP and the rise of Islamism. The *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) cases show how this intervening variable works in this context. After threats from the Kemalist bureaucracy to the survival of the AKP, the AKP wanted to erase the Kemalist segment from the state. This conflict is a condition for the survival of the AKP and it pushed the AKP towards more authoritarian policies against these forces, which have been the guardians of secularism since the Republican era.

One of the victims of these cases is Mustafa Balbay, who has been in prison for three years due to the *Ergenekon* investigation. He says, 'we started to write about the AKP's authoritarianism and Islamism in 2007 and received a prize while in *Silivri* (a prison where the *Ergenekon* trials took place).⁵⁰ Balbay argues that when Erdoğan wanted to engage in authoritarianism, he used these clashes to gain the support of external institutions such as the European Union and the United States.

Some other academics are aware of the AKP's rising authoritarianism after 2007. One of them is Professor İlhan Uzgel.⁵¹ Uzgel thinks that, in terms of the democratisation process, the Kurdish peace process, and the EU accession process, all of these dynamics were started after 1999. As a result, these developments did not start with the AKP government, who just continued these already-existing processes. According to Uzgel, some leftist liberals and other groups see the AKP as a 'redeemer' and Erdoğan as a 'deliverer'.⁵² Uzgel warned his colleagues about this issue in 2005 and wrote an article in the *Radikal* newspaper on this issue.⁵³ He argues that most of the liberal scholars gave unlimited credit to the AKP government in the struggle against Kemalist military domination and they could not have been aware of the rise of AKP's authoritarianism in Turkish politics.

⁵⁰ Interview with Mustafa Balbay- Ankara/ 1st December 2015

⁵¹ Uzgel received his master's degree from Ankara University's International Relations Relations department after graduating from Uludağ University's International Relations Department. In the year 1993 he conducted research at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) towards his PhD thesis. Receiving his MPhil degree from Cambridge University, to which he attended utilising Jean Monnet Scholarship, Uzgel completed his PhD studies at Ankara University in 1997. Professor Uzgel was currently teaching on International Relations Theories, the Balkans, US Foreign Policy and Turkish Foreign Policy at International Relations Department at Ankara University, where he started his academic career in 1988. He was dismissed from Ankara University by AKP's executive order.

⁵² Interview with İlhan Uzgel- Ankara/ 22th October 2015

⁵³ <http://www.radikal.com.tr/radikal2/akpyi-konumlandirmak-872203/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

A similar explanation has come from Professor Fethi Açıkel.⁵⁴ Açıkel⁵⁵ says that he doesn't agree with the AKP's identification as a 'redeemer' from Kemalism during their clash with military/secular powers. He points out that secularist or Kemalist elites were proved right about the AKP's transition from democracy to authoritarianism in Turkish politics. Mustafa Şen, Associate Professor at Middle East Technical University in the field of the sociology of religion in Turkey, focuses on the slight chance of a military coup in Turkish politics during the 2000s. Şen⁵⁶ indicates that the AKP were established within a huge coalition in Turkish domestic politics. About half of Turkish citizens voted for them in the election and there was international support for the AKP and Erdoğan's government from institutions like the European Union. It was not possible for the military forces to find support against the AKP, which they were supported by internal and external actors in the 28 February military coup. As seen in the new developments in the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases, these trials are based on illegal evidence and Şen demonstrates why the AKP has not been fair in its struggle against military domination.

The *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* investigations led to two opposing views among politicians and academics. While one group believed that these investigations would primarily lead to the civilianization of Turkey, another group advocated that the AKP would move towards an authoritarian position.

The last raid of Ergenekon investigation particularly focused on secular-oriented civil society associations, such as the Association for Supporting Modern Life [Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği], Modern Education Foundation [Çağdaş Eğitim Vakfı], pro-Atatürk Thinking Association [Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği], and '68 Foundation [68'liler Vakfı]. Among the arrests and detentions there were executive members and staff of these secular civil society associations, such as Professor Ayşe Yüksel; secular-oriented university presidents, such as President

⁵⁴ Açıkel is a professor of political sociology in the Faculty of Political Science at Ankara University. He has published articles in the fields of historical and political sociology, nationalism and Turkish politics.

⁵⁵ Interview with Fethi Açıkel, Ankara/ 8 November 2015.

⁵⁶ Interview with Mustafa Şen, Ankara/22 December 2015.

of Başkent University Professor Mehmet Haberal, President of Giresun University Professor Osman Metin Öztürk, former President of Ondokuz Mayıs University Professor Ferit Bernay, former President of Uludağ University Professor Mustafa Yurtkuran, and former President of İnönü University Professor Fatih Hilmioğlu; secular-oriented professors, such as Professor Erol Manisalı; and a number of students who received scholarship from the Modern Education Foundation. (Eligür, 2011: 274).

As Eligür emphasized in this quotation, the AKP government not only fought with the Kemalist military powers who were behind the coup attempt against the AKP, but arrested authors and academics known for their secular identity in Turkish society. However, there were also those who saw the AKP as a democratisation movement. On the one hand, scholars like Keyman (2010), Özbudun (2009), and Grigoriadis (2009) thought that the AKP would give clear political signals of their intentions to respect religious freedoms and advocate a tolerant version of secularism. On the other hand, some, like Eligür (2011), Baran (2010), and Bogdani (2011), claim that the AKP won this war against secular forces and had the power alone in Turkey's political area after 2007.

Obviously, the AKP clearly increased the role of Islam in Turkish politics and public life with authoritarian policies for the post-2007 period. One of the scholars, Walter Posch (2007), claims that 'Islamisation in Turkish everyday life is a fact and primarily affects small and medium-sized towns. The renaissance of religious consciousness is undeniable as people are more pious, at least outwardly, and the political discourse revolves much more around religion than was the case a few decades ago'. Bogdani (2011: 17-49) gives the following examples as evidence of increasing Islamisation in Turkey: boys and girls are separated in many public places, and women are covered from head to foot; a court punished a woman due to her wearing 'improper clothing' and a court claimed that it was 'exhibitionism'; alcohol is harder to come by in the shops; many shops did not sell pork or pork products; newspaper advertisements are photo-shopped to lengthen sleeves and skirts; Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has called on women to have at least three children and their party

has very few female members of Parliament and members of the Cabinet; the number of women in the workforce dropped by about 10% between 2000 and 2006.

In March 2011, the Directorate of Religious Affairs launched the new so-called 'family imam' project (Karakaya, 2015: 6). Along with other religious officials including the Mufti of certain regions, the imams would pay visits to citizens' homes to listen to their problems, provide advice on resolving them, and warn society at large about the harms of using alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs (Eligür, 2014: 151). The other issue is the religious discrimination against secularists and minority groups. A February 2011 report by the Istanbul-based Bilgi University entitled *Discrimination Based on Religion and Faith in Turkey*⁵⁷ found that many victims of religious discrimination have bowed to Islamist pressure and opted to change their lifestyles. In August 2010, the government revised the National Security Policy Paper (NSPP) and removed Islamist "reactionism" or fundamentalism from the list of threats. Islamist reactionism and fundamentalist groups had been on the list of crucial domestic threats to the secular-democratic Turkish state (Gürsoy, 2011: 293-308). In addition to these critical developments in Turkish domestic politics in relation to the rise of Islamism, there are crucial reactions in Turkish policy to this phenomenon. Banu Eligür (2011: 273) indicates that under AKP rule, Turkey's establishment of close relations with political Islamist regimes like Iran, Hamas, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia should also be noted. This became even more visible during Israel's military operations in Gaza during the winter of 2009.

Another issue that highlights the smaller AKP's winning coalition in light of its political survival is the change of the AKP's coalitional party structure during its second term. The other coalition members of the AKP's founding process began to withdraw their support for the AKP during the second term of Erdoğan's government. Some of the AKP's party members who are related to centre-right actors or non-*Milli Görüş*' politicians left the AKP after 2007. Two of Erdoğan's top advisers, Reha Çamuroğlu and Cüneyd Zapsu, who identified themselves as liberal, quit their posts,

⁵⁷<http://insanhaklarimerkezi.bilgi.edu.tr/en/publication/13-turkiyede-din-veya-inanc-temelinde-ayrilmagn-izlenmesi-raporu/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

while two other key figures of the party, Dengir Mir Mehmet Fırat (who is a Kurdish politician), resigned after corruption allegations surrounded them, triggering concerns that the prime minister had lost the architects of his successful policies of the previous term (Hidayet, 2018: 68).

As argued in Chapter 2, when the FP was closed down by the constitutional court in 2001 for being a centre for anti-secular activities, Erdoğan tried to persuade many people with no Islamic background to join the party in an attempt to reach out to wider social and political groups. As a result, liberal names continued joining during the election period, especially names from the centre-right like Erkan Mumcu from the Motherland Party, and Köksal Toptan and Mehmet Dülger from the True Path Party (Dagi, 2006). However, all of these political actors did not continue their political career with the AKP after its second term in government.

The other political split with the AKP government came from Western-style business organisations, in particular TUSIAD. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is no serious conflict between the secular business community and the AKP because its policies have been extremely business-friendly. Nevertheless, Erdoğan and his colleagues knew that they needed to create their own oligarchs rather than TUSIAD's Western economic actors such as Aydın Doğan. The Doğan case is therefore one of the most important examples of the AKP's political survival during its second term. While the media outlets, most of which were acquired by pro-AKP businessmen after having been seized by the TMSF, were financed by government-run companies' advertisement, their mainstream rivals were roughed up by seizures, tax audits, and severe penalties. In 2009, the Doğan Group, which once enjoyed an advertising share of 58 per cent in the printed media, was given a tax penalty of 825 million Turkish Liras, the group was forced to reduce its assets and shut down some of its media ventures (Irak, 2016: 345).

Consequently, this study argues that the tension between Kemalist/military elites and the AKP was the first contributing factor for ensuring AKP's political

survival along with its decreasing coalition. The last breaking point for this phenomenon was the Turkish constitutional referendum in 2010.

4. 'Not Enough But Yes' (*Yetmez Ama Evet*): 2010 Turkish Constitutional Referendum

Turkey needs a new social contract, a brand new constitution. If it's "yes," the constitution process will be sped up and become a priority topic of the next elections due in 2011. If the package is rejected, the new constitution will be shelved for some time because the government's hand will be weakened. And solutions to our arch-old problems, primarily the Kurdish question, will be delayed again. Make no mistake.⁵⁸

The quote from prominent liberal intellectual Cengiz Aktar, who joined the platform 'Not Enough But Yes' (*Yetmez Ama Evet*) for the Turkish constitutional referendum in September 2010 (Bali, 2010). This platform (initiated in July 2010), which brought together well-known and self-declared liberal intellectuals such as Baskın Oran, Adalet Ağaoğlu, Osman Can, Ferhat Kentel, and Nabi Yağcı, declared that they were going to support the constitutional changes that were the subject of the referendum (Ciddi, 2011). The Turkish Parliament adopted a series of constitutional amendments in 2010. However, the amendments did not achieve the required two-thirds majority (67%) needed to immediately implement the changes and the amendments went to the electorate through a referendum (Oruco, 2011: 11).

During the referendum process, two important members of the AKP's coalition, the Gülen movement and some liberal intellectuals who established the '*Yetmez Ama Evet*' platform, supported Erdoğan's government and called for a 'yes' vote. They believed that the decision by Turkish voters on 26 amendments to the constitution would represent Turkey "coming to terms" with the coup d'etat of 12 September

⁵⁸ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/it-is-not-enough-but-yes.aspx?pageID=438&n=it-is-not-enough-but-yes-2010-12-21> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

1980. Başak Alpan points out that⁵⁹ the constitution had been drawn up by a constituent assembly, appointed and supervised by the military leaders, and adopted by a nationwide referendum held under martial conditions. The AKP claimed that the 26 amendments could be seen as ‘coming to terms’ with the coup is far from reality (Düzgit, 2012: 329-346). As discussed above, some of the liberal academics and politicians voted ‘yes’ in the referendum due to the AKP’s claim about 1980 coup and the democratisation process which was linked to EU accession (Duygu and Üstüner, 2016: 406-428). They believed these changes were aimed at bringing the constitution into compliance with European Union accession process’ standards (Karaveli, 2010: 85-102). However, these amendments have many problems in terms of the rule of law and democracy. Murat Sevinç argues that if consensus really matters for the ratification of the constitution, the amendments should be classified according to their content and voted upon separately by the voters.⁶⁰ This research suggests that these changes harmed the principle of the separation of powers in the Turkish legal system. Most of the members of the Constitutional Court have been elected by pro-AKP President Abdullah Gül and the anti-democratic structure of the Higher Board of Prosecutors and Judges (HSYK-*Hakim ve Savcılar Yüksek Kurulu*) has continued with these amendments (Bardakçı, 2013: 411-428).

Indeed, most of the Turkish left ran a campaign for a ‘no’ vote in the referendum due to the threats to the rule of law and democracy. Nevertheless, the results showed the majority supported the constitutional amendments, with 58% in favour and 42% against. Some of the liberal academics and politicians from my participants in the fieldwork voted ‘yes’ due to the aim of the democratisation/civilisation process in Turkey but they have since become aware of the AKP’s authoritarianism in the third term of Erdoğan’s government, claiming, ‘we were deceived!’⁶¹ This research claims that they had not been deceived by the AKP because this alliance is related to the AKP’s political survival. Following of E-Memorendum and the AKP’s closure trial in 2008, the AKP began to fight against

⁵⁹Alpan, Başak, ‘Turkey’s Referandum: What was the question again?’, <http://www.enduringamerica.com/home/2010/9/15/turkeys-referendum-what-was-the-question-again-alpan.html> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁶⁰<http://www.enduringamerica.com/home/2010/9/15/turkeys-referendum-what-was-the-question-again-alpan.html> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁶¹ <http://www.diken.com.tr/evet-kandirildik-ama-iyi-ki-kandik/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

Kemalist/military powers and used the tool of democratisation in order to legitimize their struggle, although this struggle has many problems in terms of the rule of law and democracy. These liberal intellectuals and the Gülen movement are one of the Kemalist elites' rivals and they supported the AKP in order to decrease the Kemalist/military elites' power in Turkish politics. In this sense, the rule of law and democracy is not a particularly sensitive issue for their agenda.

Gareth Jenkins summarises the AKP's 'real' agenda with its coalition members during the beginning of this conflict as follows:

At the time, what is commonly known as the Gülen Movement had formed an alliance of convenience with Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In return for its support, Erdoğan had allowed the movement to establish a substantial presence in the police and the judiciary, which was then used to target their shared enemies, opponents and rivals – ranging from hardline secularists to military personnel, charity workers, journalists, lawyers, trade union officials, opposition politicians, Turkish nationalists and Kurdish nationalists. Thousands of people were charged and imprisoned and tens of thousands more were intimidated into silence for fear of meeting a similar fate.” (Jenkins, 2009: 1)

This research supports Jenkins' arguments. The AKP ruled to protect its power by eliminating other actors in Turkish politics. Following the referendum, the size of the HSYK and the Constitutional Court was increased - from 7 to 22 and from 11 to 17, respectively - and President Gül and the AKP-dominated parliament appointed pro-AKP personnel to these institutions (Özbudun, 2013: 293). In the October 2010 HSYK elections, 11,000 judges and prosecutors voted for all 16 of the Justice Ministry-supported candidates, representing another major victory for the AKP. The ministry's official representation on the board increased from two to five. In November 2010, the new HSYK promptly approved the Justice Ministry's annual appointment list of 190 high-ranking judges and prosecutors (Eligür, 2014: 151-175). Likewise, in December 2010, the HSYK elected chairmanships for its three chambers, which regulate promotions, appointments, duties of serving judges and prosecutors, their

expulsions, and admission of new judges and prosecutors to the profession. Three Justice Ministry-supported HSYK members were also elected as the chamber chairs. In the winter of 2011, the AKP continued to restructure the high judiciary. In February 2011, the AKP-dominated parliament passed a new regulation to increase the number of members of the Supreme Court of Appeals and the Council of State: The Supreme Court of Appeals' membership increased from 250 to 387 and that of the Council of State from 95 to 156 (Eligür, 2014: 151-175). The AKP maintained its policy of increasing its control over the high judiciary by appointing pro-AKP individuals.

The power struggle with Kemalist elites mentioned at the beginning of the chapter has been shown as a democratisation movement. However, the AKP went far beyond its struggle with these threats, neutralizing all the Kemalist and secular elites in the state bureaucracy and Turkish politics. At the same time, this phenomenon would have forced the AKP to go towards a more authoritarian and Islamist position because of both its electoral base and intra-party dynamics. This chapter has explored how the beginning of the rise of authoritarianism was built throughout the AKP's second term and how it depends on the AKP's survival.

5. Conclusion

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the AKP established itself in 2001 and won the elections of November 2002. When the party first assumed power in 2002, the winning coalition included both domestic and external supporters such as European countries and the United States, liberal intellectuals within Turkey, moderate Islamist groups like the Gülen movement, conservative citizens of Turkish society, centre-right voters, faith-based non-profit organisations, Western-style business institutions like TUSIAD. However, this coalition started to shrink after the second term of the AKP 2007 and 2011. During this term, there was a serious clash between the AKP and the military/Kemalist bureaucracy in the form of investigations and trials such as *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz*. This chapter explored the dynamics of this power struggle

and the AKP's power consolidation process in light of the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival.

The first independent variable of AKP's political survival, the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism, was examined in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the second independent variable of AKP's survival, the power struggle of the AKP with the Kemalist elite, was explained. De Mesquita's selectorate theory, which was used as a political survival theory in this study, foresees threats to survival in particular. It argues that political leadership begins a far more comprehensive struggle to overcome these threats. In case of Turkey, the AKP government encountered the 2007 coup attempt and the 2008 closure trial. The AKP has not only struggled with the forces that created these threats, but also tried to end the existence of all the Kemalist and secular elites in the state bureaucracy. At the same time, the AKP's power struggle also contributed to preserve its political survival in Turkish politics. The *Ergenekon* and 'Sledgehammer' cases, the 2010 Constitutional amendments, and policy changes contributing to the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics have been examined in this chapter as intervening variables clarifying this second independent variable.

At Turkey's general elections on 12 June 2011, the governing Justice and Development Party won 50% of the overall vote. This was the first time that a ruling party in Turkey has increased its vote in a third term. In Chapter 4, first the 2011 elections will be analysed in detail and the AKP, which followed a populist and authoritarian path in the clash with the Kemalists in particular will examine how the voters consolidated in the 2011 elections with these policies. Thus, the direct causal link between populist and authoritarian policy instruments and AKP's survival will also shape the post-2011 policies of the AKP. The causal mechanism between authoritarianism and populism and political survival of the AKP as the third independent variable in Chapter 4 will be explained by exploring policy tools used as intervening variables.

Chapter 4: The Rise of Populism and Authoritarianism during the AKP's Third Term (2011-14)

1. Introduction

According to them we don't understand politics. According to them we don't understand art, theatre, cinema, poetry. According to them we don't understand aesthetics, architecture. According to them we are uneducated, ignorant, the lower-class, who has to be content with what is being given, needy; meaning, we are a group of negroes (Ferguson, 2014: 77).

AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's remarks during the Gezi Park protests and his political understanding of the populism have been used by the AKP during its third term in office. This chapter will focus on the AKP's populism through authoritarianism in the AKP's third term to understand the AKP's political survival. One of the most important factors contributing to the survival of leaders or parties has been to keep the nominal selectorate (voters) as large as possible. During its second and third periods, the AKP broke that broad voting coalition on the basis of its founding philosophy and eliminated its partners one by one. The distinguishing feature of these coalition partners is that they defined themselves as specifically secular. As the tension with the secularists consistently grew from 2007, the AKP had to assume a more conservative identity in order to keep its nominal selectorate wide. This forced the AKP to produce a populist strategy over the Kemalists and secularists and this strategy has been carried out via authoritarian policies. This strategy is identified as a third independent variable of the AKP's political survival, especially after 2011.

At this point, the AKP carried out a populist strategy between secular and conservative citizens in Turkey and consolidated the support of conservative voters for the AKP. This chapter uses empirical and statistical evidence, such as the 2014 local and presidential election results, public speeches by Erdoğan and other AKP leaders, newspaper articles, and important developments and events in Turkish politics concerning the rise of Islamism through elite interviews with politicians, academics and student groups.

As stated at the end of Chapter 3, the first factor that led the AKP to follow a populist and authoritarian policy after 2011 was the 2011 elections. In this context, this chapter will first examine the 2011 elections in-depth and explore the relationship between these elections, which contribute to the survival of the AKP, and the populism of the AKP.

2. 2011 Parliamentary Election

At Turkey's general elections on 12 June 2011, the governing Justice and Development Party won 50% of the overall vote. What is perhaps most remarkable about the 2011 results, in comparison with the previous two general elections, is not only the AKP's steadily rising share of the vote but also the sheer number of votes cast for the AKP. The AKP got 10.8 million votes (34.3% of all valid votes) in 2002, 16.3 million in 2007 (46.6% of the valid votes), and approximately 21.4 million (49.8% of the valid votes) in 2011 (Çarkoğlu, 2011: 48). As such, over the course of nine years, the number of votes cast for the AKP has nearly doubled. This was the first time that a ruling party in Turkey has increased its vote in a third term and was extremely important for Erdoğan (Tombuş, 2013: 312-327). In the lead-up to the election, he had said that, while during his first and second terms in power he was an 'apprentice' then a 'foreman', a third term would make him a 'master' (Selçuk, 2016: 571-589). This statement of Erdoğan shows his increasing power in both the AKP and Turkish politics. Established with a large winning coalition (as per De Mesquita's theory), the AKP has consistently narrowed this coalition to protect its survival. At the

same time, this situation led to Erdoğan to increase his power in the party (Cornell, 2014). Erdoğan's journey from 'apprentice' to 'master' must be understood in this way. As seen from this speech, Erdoğan's style of government would change during his third term.

Behind the success achieved by the AKP in these elections was the proliferation of populist and authoritarian governance that would be instrumentalised and targeted especially seculars and Kemalists that affected the 2010 Constitutional referendum. The 2010 constitutional amendment demonstrated that the AKP's electoral supremacy had been transformed into political dominance, providing it with the ability to set the agenda and determine the frame of the debate. The AKP's strategy for the general elections would be based on 'framing the election as a vote for the continuation of the democratic processes' and working towards winning at least 367 parliamentary seats to be able to make a new constitution (SETA, 2011).

In 2011, the AKP's electoral campaign was not particularly focused on the constitution issue; instead, a carefully crafted and administered campaign was built around the themes of the continuation of political and economic stability and development. Mega projects involving Turkey's big cities were the most central part of its campaign. These turned out to be the most important theme of the election campaign in addressing moderate voters and capturing their imagination. The AKP's election manifesto, 'Turkey is Ready, Target is 2023', outlined various objectives in democratization, and economic and social development (Akman, 2012, 83). Comprising sections on 'advanced democracy, grand economy, strong society, liveable environment and brand-name cities, and a leading nation', the manifesto detailed the policy achievements of the government such as economic stability and effective service delivery and social policies in education, health, transportation and housing, and put forward new objectives to be accomplished by the 100th anniversary of the Turkish Republic.⁶² As was the case in the 2010 referendum campaign, Erdoğan's 'advanced democracy' rhetoric served for projecting an image

⁶² AKP Election Manifesto, Türkiye Hazır, Hedef 2023, <http://www.akparti.org.tr>. (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

of the 2011 electoral contest as another turning point in the struggle against 'the age of tutelage in Turkey', when 'a handful of elites, gangs and the capital had wasted the resources of the country'.⁶³ Erdogan's frequent references back to the defunct Democratic Party of the 1950s, which, in his words, had replaced the elitist and pro-military mentality of the CHP, were blended with populist verbal attacks on the early Republican period under the CHP's single-party rule (Gürsoy, 2012, 191-211).

This populist and authoritarian policy which the AKP has run against the CHP and the secular opposition has also made it possible to further consolidate its own constituency. One of the surveys that KONDA made before the election points to this situation. The proportion of participants who expressed their confidence in the AKP government's struggle against illegal organisations in the Ergenekon Case came close to 60% in this survey.⁶⁴ The AKP government, which regarded the existence of such a rate as an opportunity, would push this campaign in a populist line to run a campaign of elections, especially through the opposition party CHP, in order to consolidate the conservative mass of voters. The election results also showed the achievability of this plan.

The results of the 2011 general elections indicated the continuation of the trends from 2007. The elections produced a tri-partite division with four political blocs in the TBMM: the CHP, the Kurdish nationalist representatives and the MHP entered the parliament as the opposition, with a total of 223 seats. The AKP, CHP and BDP (the party established to succeed the Kurdish nationalist DTP) increased their votes compared to 2007, and the MHP vote fell from 14.3 to 12.9. per cent (Akman, 2012:79) While the AKP won a comfortable majority (with 327 seats) to form the 62nd government on its own, it fell short of the minimum number of seats (330) required to enable it to pass constitutional amendments in the parliament followed by referendum. ANAP and DYP almost vanished at the ballot box, reflecting their institutional decline since the mid-1990s (Çarkoğlu, 2011).

⁶³ 'Erdogan: Vesayet Altında Siyaset Bitti', Sabah, 6 June 2011.

⁶⁴ http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2011_06_KONDA_Barometre_4_Aylık_Rapor_Secim_Analizi.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

The poll analysis that IPSOS⁶⁵, one of the major public opinion research companies has taken place after the elections in 2011 confirms the relationship between the increasing AKP's populism and survival of the AKP in light of the clash with Kemalists. 65% of the AKP voters who participated in the IPSOS voter survey believed that the AKP promised democracy after the struggle with Kemalist establishment in Turkish state. Moreover, 45% of the AKP voters said that they voted for the AKP on the basis of an investigation into the September 12, 1980 coup, under the name of reckoning with the Kemalist regime. This is also evidence of the AKP's contribution to its political survival with a pragmatic and populist rhetoric during the struggle with the Kemalist regime.

Obviously, the 2011 general elections mark the emergence of a dominant party system in Turkey (Carkoglu, 2011: 43-62), with an essentially four-way party competition in the TBMM. Consistent increases in the government party's share of the vote guaranteed the preservation of its parliamentary majority, and the consolidation of its power in the Turkish political system. At the same time, this political environment was a sign that the AKP government would go for a more populist and authoritarian policy, especially against the secular base, in order to sustain conservative voter support.

This chapter will also show how the causal mechanism of the AKP's survival in the party's third term has been established. However, before delving into this question, Chapter 4 will examine the peak of the rise in populism and authoritarianism in Turkish politics after 2011. This review will be based on the speeches of AKP politicians, the party politics of the AKP, and changes made in the party's structure during this period.

⁶⁵ <http://www.arastirmakutuphanesi.com/2011-genel-secimleri-sandik-sonrasi-arastirmasi/> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

3. The Rise of Authoritarianism and Islamist Populism in Turkish Politics

At Turkey's general elections on 12 June 2011, the governing AKP won 49.9% of the overall vote. This was the first time that a ruling party in Turkey has increased its vote in a third term, and it allowed the AKP's Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to continue as prime minister after nine years in power. However, a potential danger for the AKP at this juncture would be a heavier reliance upon the party leader's authority to reshape the party organisation (Lancaster, 2014: 1683). Erdoğan took matters more into his own hands during the third term. The AKP's coalition with independent, non-party liberal democrats ended due to the rise of Erdoğan's authoritarian leadership. Moreover, these groups identify themselves as 'liberal and secular' and Erdoğan and the AKP sought to become more conservative in order to polarise voters in Turkey (Özbudun, 2014: 157). The rapid increase of Islamism in Turkish politics in the third term of the AKP has been observed in many policy areas. One of these areas is the AKP's education policies.

During its third term in power, the AKP has focused on changing the education system in ways that favour the Islamist movement. In February 2012, Erdoğan stated that his government had initiated a "silent revolution" in Turkey and called for the raising of a 'religious and revengeful youth' (Tolunay, 2014: 49). Despite the protests of both centre-left and centre-right secular sections of Turkish society, in March 2012, the AKP-dominated parliament amended the mandatory education system to favour the Islamist movement. The AKP's education bill introduced a mandatory 12 year education that would be divided into three layers: four years of primary school, four years of secondary (middle) school, and four years of high school (Lüküslü, 2016: 7). The amended Education Law allows families the flexibility to choose among different types of secondary schools, including general and vocational schools and religious *Imam Hatip* schools (Grigoriadis and Gürçel, 2012: 300-322). The bill not only kept the mandatory teaching of the religion curriculum, but also introduced two additional elective religion courses - the Quran and 'the Life of Our Prophet, His Majesty' (Eligür, 2014: 167-168). Following the vote, Erdoğan declared that "the last trace of

the February 28 process has been erased” (Kaya, 2015: 57). After the passing of this bill, there were other regulations concerning *Imam Hatip* schools. For instance, in September 2012, the AKP announced that it had been working on a regulation allowing *Imam Hatip* graduates’ admission into military academies (Eligur, 2014: 168-170).

The visible increase of Islamist populism is not only limited to educational issues. Erdoğan has made very aggressive speeches about woman’s rights and secular lifestyles. For example, Erdoğan has referred to abortion as ‘murder’ (O’Neil, 2017: 148-153). In May 2012, the AKP government prepared a draft law whose stated goals were to increase fertility across the country. The draft law aims to restrict women’s rights by imposing an abortion ban after the fourth week of pregnancy. The other important issue for Erdoğan is about alcohol. Although the law does not prohibit consumption of alcoholic beverages, it bans their advertisement in the printed and visual media (Özbudun, 2014: 157). Moreover, the AKP government stated that the new regulations prohibited the sale of alcohol after 10 p.m. On the one hand, some AKP politicians tried to justify the alcohol law on the basis of public health arguments while; on the other hand, Erdoğan defended it with reference to religious injunctions - ‘Is there anything wrong with pursuing a policy ordered by religion?’ (Özbudun, 2014: 157)

The other example of AKP’s policy is his views on Turkish secular lifestyles. In November 2012, Erdoğan promised to end mixed-sex student residences, not only in dormitories but also private student residences and flats. Kaya (2015: 57-58) points out that many people, including the then prime minister, disapprove of mixed-gender living situations as counter to Islamic beliefs and laws. It was reported that, during a closed-door meeting, Erdoğan said that ‘this is against our conservative, democratic character...We witnessed this in the province of Denizli, an inland town in the Aegean Region. The insufficiency of dormitories causes problems. Male and female university students are living in the same accommodations. This is not being checked’ (Kaya, 2015: 58). The AKP’s involvement in conservative women’s politics and the lives of secularists is the strategic use of the Kemalist-conservative conflict

as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. By implementing this policy, the AKP is especially targeting the support of conservative voter. The AKP tries to maintain its survival by polarizing its own conservative supporters against the secularists. How it transforms this situation into a policy instrument will be examined in the next sections of this chapter.

The other important agenda for Erdoğan is the Kemalist heritage of the Turkish Republic. The AKP has banned the celebration of national holidays, including the Republic's foundation day (Seckinelgin, 2016: 272). It erased "the Turkish Republic" from official buildings and tried to intimidate citizens who protested the AKP's policies by sending in riot police to disperse demonstrators. (Eligür, 2014: 151-175). Erdoğan made a very provocative speech during this debate. Erdoğan implicitly called Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and İsmet İnönü 'drunken lawmakers' (Çelik, 2016: 215).

The rise of Islamist populism in Turkish politics is not directly proved by Erdoğan's speeches. Secularism has become one of the problems in terms of freedom of expression after the increase of Islamist populism in Turkish public and political life (Bogdani, 2011: 17-49). The case of Fazıl Say is a good example of this phenomenon. World-renowned Turkish pianist Fazıl Say had been given a suspended ten-month jail sentence for insulting Muslim values on his Twitter account in 2013 (Tunç, 2013: 153-163). Say is an important artist and he defends the values of secularism in the Republic of Turkey. Moreover, he has criticised some elements of Islam and has regularly received abuse as a result. In one of these cases in 2013, a İstanbul court found Say guilty over a series of posts on the social networking site Twitter. In one of the examples of his posts, he says: 'I am not sure if you have also realised it, but if there's a louse, a non-entity, a lowlife, a thief or a fool, it's always an Allah-ist' (Tunç, 2013: 159). Many artists and intellectuals believe that this view is only a non-violent criticism Islam. However, their critics have accused the governing AKP of undermining Turkey's secular values and pandering to Islamists (Szymanski, 2015: 55). This study argues that the example of Fazıl Say is one of the important issues indicating the increasing progress of Islamist populism in Turkish politics.

This research argues that all these developments clearly demonstrate the rise of Islamist populism and authoritarianism in Turkish political and public life in many areas. As a result, the tension between secularists and the AKP has increased and finally resulted in mass anti-government demonstrations throughout Turkey. Turkey was particularly affected by one of the biggest and strongest protests in Gezi Park. In the beginning, a small number of environmentalists were camping out in protest against the AKP governments' urban development plans to build a replica Ottoman-era barracks and a mosque on Taksim Square and Gezi Park. Indeed, this protest was peaceful. However, in the early morning of 28 May and 31 May, police used tear gas against a small number of environmentalists to stop their protest and burned down their tents in order to allow construction to continue (Anisin, 2016: 415). As a result of these police attacks in Taksim Square, more than 100 people were injured, several of them seriously. After this event Turkey has been engulfed by a series of protests across many major cities, police turned Istanbul's busiest city centre hub into a battleground, deploying tear gas and water cannon against thousands of peaceful demonstrators (Karakayalı and Yaka, 2014: 118).

Protesters included liberals, secularists, conservatives, centre-leftists, centre-rightists, leftists, anti-capitalist Islamists, Turkish nationalists, Alevis, white-collar professionals, workers, and students (Damar, 2016: 207-222). All of these groups identify as 'secular' and criticized Erdoğan's populist and Islamist speeches and the AKP's authoritarian policies (Lancaster, 2014: 1684). It is clear that the Gezi Park protests revealed the deep polarisation that now exists in society but predominantly between liberals and secularists and Islamists and the urban and rural poor, who receive AKP incentives (Kaya, 2015: 52). Despite the mass protests, Prime Minister Erdoğan managed to consolidate his power, but these protests show that the conflict between the secularists and the AKP has reached a peak in terms of the rise of authoritarianism in Turkey. The AKP was seen as ostensibly micromanaging every aspect of people's lives, from the number of children families should conceive to their practices as observant Muslims, from regulating their alcohol consumption patterns to discouraging caesarean sections and abortions (Abbas and Yiğit, 2015: 62-63). The Islamic line of explanations and policy aims referred to throughout this chapter have

caused a reaction, especially among secular and Kemalist citizens. One of the participants in the protests stated that:

The last thing that happened was the remark from the Prime Minister who said that Atatürk and his best friend, İnönü, were *ayyas* (drunkards). This was so offensive to us and the second thing he said that we are *capulcular* (plunderers or looters). And also, he said in the past that all women should have three kids. Why? Why? Why? Then there is the abortion issue. And then they try to introduce fundamentalist Islamic sharia inside Turkey (Abbas and Yiğit, 2015: 67).

Some of the slogans seen in the Gezi protests included: 'cheers Tayyip'; 'you banned alcohol, now we are awake'; and 'do you want three more children like us?' (Görkem, 2015: 589). The Gezi Park protests, which were initially born out of environmental sensitivity, were actually the reaction of secularists against the rise of Islamism, which continued to increase after 2011. The AKP government, on the other hand, continued to polarise its supporters with Islamist and populist arguments instead of counteracting this secular opposition. One example is related to the AKP government authorities' allegation that the demonstrators drank alcohol in a mosque (Demirhan, 2014: 295). It was later revealed that demonstrators did no such thing.

Another of the AKP's claims was that during the Gezi Park protests a head-covered woman was harassed by the protesters (Yılmaz: 150-171). Although this claim could not be verified, the AKP and Erdoğan used the headscarf story to polarise further polarise conservatives and secularists. He addressed his female supporters, many of whom are religiously conservative and cover their heads, warning that the occupiers of Gezi Park were threatening 'our sisters in headscarves' (Selçuk, 2016: 578). The AKP's acceleration of this populist strategy through secularism in order to increase support amongst conservative voters and the growing reaction of the secularists to it, also questioned the existence of a clash between Islamism and Europeanisation in Turkey at the same time. Özbudun summarizes the effect of the Gezi Park protests, in terms of Islamism and Europeanisation in Turkey, below:

In any case, the Gezi Park events exacted a heavy toll on Turkey. First, they deepened the already worrying degree of polarisation between the religious and secular sectors of society, i.e. between the supporters and opponents of the AKP. Secondly, they hurt Turkey's international image as a prominent secular and democratic Muslim country with the potential to serve as a model for the rest of the Muslim world, particularly for the Arab Spring countries. As the President of the Republic, Abdullah Gul, put it succinctly, 'an image that you strive to build in ten years, can be destroyed in one week' Thirdly, and relatedly, the government's strong reaction to the protesters invited criticisms from the EU, the Council of Europe, and many Western circles, creating further tensions in the already stumbling Turkey–EU accession negotiations (Özbudun, 2014: 158).

In this chapter, it has been argued that the harsh and undemocratic reactions of the AKP government to events of Gezi Park indicated to the rise of Islamist populism combined with authoritarianism in the period after the 2011 elections. Following this explanation, how the AKP's populism and authoritarianism, which is the third independent variable of this research, clarifies the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival as will be explained in the rest of this Chapter.

4. The Dissolution of the AKP's Large Coalition: 'We do not need Liberals'

Those who were somehow [partners] of ours in the 10 years of our rule will not be partners for us in the next 10 years," Aziz Babuşçu was quoted as saying by Anatolia news agency in Istanbul 2013 during a meeting of the Suriçi Group. "[This is] because in the last 10 years, there were partners of ours who were standing by what we did in a liquidation process and in defining freedom, the rule of law and justice. Although they cannot tolerate us, let's say liberal circles, they have been partners of ours for some reason, but the future period of constructing will not be like that. The coming term will not be liberals' "desire," he said.

“Hence, those partners will not be with us. Those [liberals] who somehow walked with us will be the partners of those who are against us because the Turkey that is to be built will not feature a future that they accept or desire. That’s why our task is even harder.”⁶⁶

As seen in Babuşçu’s speech, the AKP’s large coalition has rapidly dissolved. The AKP’s coalition with liberals and intellectuals faded away after the 2011 election because Erdoğan’s leadership is the most powerful term in the AKP’s history and he does not need the same level of support from the liberals or other ex-coalition members. As a result, Erdoğan needed to change his discourse and regularly criticised liberals, intellectuals, academics and elites. When he upped his criticism against these parts of society, other parts of society (especially conservatives) supported him more. Suat Kınıklıoğlu argues that, after the victory in the 2010 referendum with 60% of vote, Erdoğan thought the Kemalists sustained the defeat against the AKP. He said they did not need legitimisation of AKP in Turkish politics and AKP controlled the whole country. As a result, Erdoğan and AKP changed his policy towards being more authoritarian and more populist, according to Kınıklıoğlu. Another ex- friend and colleague of Erdoğan, Abdullatif Şener, tried to summarise who Erdoğan is during the interview. Şener says that, ‘Erdoğan is a highly pragmatic and Machiavellian politician. He does everything for his self-interest in politics. He used the liberals in his first term and he commanded or praised them for this reason. When he felt short of support, he started to criticise liberals or intellectuals’.⁶⁷

The rise of populism and authoritarianism in Turkish politics between 2011 and 2014 has been consolidated by changes in the AKP’s policies, actions, and party mechanisms. The main motivation for these changes was the political survival of the AKP, an assertion that was expressed at the beginning of this study. So, why and how has the AKP played a more populist and authoritarian role in Turkish politics for its political survival?

⁶⁶ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/akp-to-leave-liberals-out.aspx?pageID=238&nid=44082> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁶⁷ Interview with Abdullatif Şener- Ankara/ 26th November 2015

As previously mentioned, one of the most important factors for the survival of a political party is the support of the majority of voters. The AKP, which gained strength with the support of internal and external actors during its initial establishment, had been in danger of losing its mass base and nominal selectorate due to the elimination of its coalition partners. So how could the AKP continue to keep its voters?

It was during this time that the AKP, with Erdoğan as its leader, carried out a populist strategy between the secular and conservative masses and ensured the support of the conservative voters for the party. This in turn led to more conservatives voting for the AKP and their ideas appeared in Erdoğan's policies and discourse. This shift in the nominal selectorate has allowed the realisation of the developments mentioned above with regard to the rise of Islamist populism and authoritarianism in Turkish politics.

5. The AKP's Mastery of Populism

So long as the AKP is able to maintain its policy of distributing material benefits to the urban and rural poor without taxing to pay for them, then the party is likely to preserve and even increase its voter base in the 2014 presidential and 2015 general elections. Yet, as the nationwide Gezi Park protests have showed, even if the AKP wins elections for the fourth time, growing polarisation within society may prevent the party - and the nation - from maintaining the stability it has enjoyed for more than a decade. Indeed, Turkish citizens have become increasingly polarised and divided by the AKP's Islamist agenda - with liberals and pro-secularists versus Islamists and the urban and rural poor who receive the AKP's material benefits and incentives; Alevis versus Sunnis; and Turks versus Kurds. Prime Minister Erdoğan regards Sunni Islamism as the common bond of Turkish society. Having secured half of the Turkish electorate's support over the past decade, he has been successfully pursuing the strategy of polarisation by using the rhetoric of "us" (pro-AKP voters) versus "them" (the others). By doing this, the JDP leadership forms unity among the AKP electorate and mobilizes it to vote for the party in the elections (Eligür, 2014: 175).

According to Banu Eligür, the AKP used a populist strategy via polarization of Turkish society in order to maintain its edge in Turkish politics. This strategy sought to deepen the gap between secularists and Islamists since the AKP had seen strong support from conservatives in past elections. This study argues that this strategy of encouraging polarisation affected Turkish politics and brought about the rise of populism due to this split in Turkish society. The rhetoric of 'us vs them' reached a peak during the Gezi Park protests. As discussed above, while the AKP described the protesters as *çapulcu*, they began to polarise their own mass of voters against these protestors (Göle, 2013: 12).

The separation between the Kemalists and other secular parts of Turkish society and the conservatives is at the root of the populist strategy that has marked the AKP's third term. The secular part of Turkish society was seen by the AKP as consisting of urban people with high levels of prosperity, intellectualism, and modern, Western lifestyles. On the other hand, people living in the rural areas of Anatolia were viewed as being anti-intellectual, anti-modern, anti-Western, Kemalist, and belonging to conservative families. Since the AKP knew that there were more of these people than their secular counterparts in Turkey, they put forward populist policies addressing the themes of anti-intellectualism, anti-Westernism, conservative family/culture policies, and lower-class myths in their political agenda. In Chapter 2, the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism was emphasized as the first independent variable of the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival. The intervening variable of this independent variable is the 28 February process and the EU process. In Chapter 3, the AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites is examined as the second independent variable, and this variable was explored as a intervening variables of the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases and the 2010 Constitutional amendments. In this chapter, populist policy instruments such as anti-intellectualism and lower-class mythology will be examined as intervening variables of the AKP's polarisation strategy, the third independent variable.

5.1. Anti-Intellectualism

Presidential elections were held on 10 August 2014 in order to elect the twelfth President of Turkey and the leading candidates, AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and - the CHP's and MHP's candidate - Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu clashed in this election. These two political figures are very different from each other. Ekmeleddin İhsanoglu has international experience and a background as an academic (Çarkoğlu, 2014: 4). Erdoğan focused on İhsanoglu's high profile during the election campaigns. Thus, when İhsanoglu was emphasizing his international experience (which was still not as compete as that of Erdoğan and his team), Erdoğan would reply that Turkey needs a president not a diplomat. When he highlighted he speaks three languages, Erdoğan easily debunked and dismissed the argument by saying 'Oh, he speaks three languages? That's great, but you see, we are looking for someone to run the country here and we already have plenty of translators'⁶⁸, making the poor İhsanoglu feel both sorry and silly (which this skilled sophisticated man is not). When he would try capitalise on his diplomatic background, Erdoğan would mock him by calling him '*mon cher*', a French expression used to make fun of 'cocktail party diplomats' and their supposedly mundane life, making İhsanoglu look arrogant, elitist, and cut off from the people (Kalaycıoğlu, 2015: 163) 'They ask a candidate whether he will address the issue of roads (construction) if elected. He replies he has nothing to do with roads ... They are *mon cher* but we are servants,' Erdoğan told thousands of supporters in a rally in the eastern province of Erzurum.⁶⁹

Obviously, Erdoğan's educational background is very low-profile compared with most of Turkish politicians. Following his childhood, he went to an *İmam Hatip* school to study Islamic sciences along with the regular curriculum. Hakan Yavuz (2003: 121-128) demonstrates the importance of *İmam Hatip* schools in opposing the Westernisation process in the early Republican period - the teachers in such schools

⁶⁸ <http://t24.com.tr/haber/basbakan-erdogan-istanbul-mitinginde-konusuyor,266428> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁶⁹ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/ihsanoglu-feels-the-heat-of-politics.aspx?pageID=549&nID=68811&NewsCatID=338> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

would always criticise alternative lifestyles and attack the country's Westernisation project. Due to their Islamic character, the schools promote and encourage the Islamic lifestyle as the only moral way of living. Erdoğan once observed: 'I owe everything to the *İmam Hatip* school I attended. My life was predestined in that school. I have learned patriotism, love for fellow human beings, service for the country, worship of God, environmental sciences, spirit of solidarity, and wishing for others what I want for me' (Heper and Toktaş, 2003: 163).

Erdoğan believes that Western academics have underestimated the Anatolian people and Anatolian traditions. There are some interesting events to show Erdoğan's reaction against academics during the last term of AKP rule. One of them is the youth protest against Erdoğan during his visit to the Middle East Technical University. At the time, about 3,600 police protected Erdoğan against 300 student protesters. This was six months before the Gezi protests. Erdoğan condemned not only the students for "terrorising" the campus, but also the academics for supporting their right to protest. He suggested that these academics should quit academia and join the protesters, since an academic's job is simply to teach students valuable information, like how to use a computer. He said 'I condemn all academics who support these protests. We do not need teachers like this.'⁷⁰

Another of Erdoğan's populist and authoritarian reactions against academics was on the issue of the conflict with Kurdish minorities. Before 2011, most liberal academics supported Erdoğan's government due to his attempt at a civilisation process against the role of the army and a peace process for Kurdish issue. However, after the collapse of this coalition, Erdoğan has increased his criticisms against academics. Current recent example of this came on 11 January 2016 when an initiative from Turkey, Academics for Peace, released a petition signed by 1,128 academics which called on the Turkish government to end state violence and prepare negotiation conditions with the Kurdish political movement (Öney, 2016). There are many discussions and criticisms of this initiative in addition to Erdoğan's reaction.

⁷⁰ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/originals/2014/02/turkey-Erdoğan-government-academic-freedom.html> (Accessed Date: 01/07/2017)

However, Erdoğan's reaction was mostly directed at academics. Erdoğan referred to academics as 'lumpen', 'half-portion intellectuals', and 'crappy so-called' and said that;

There is no old Turkey anymore where a handful of lumpen calling themselves intellectual, academics rule. Half-portion enlightenment, same circles have never changed. These lumpen circles once again have showed their true faces. They ripped off their mask. They have directly showed the terror propaganda they have been conducting indirectly for years by means of the declaration. They can struggle as much as they want. There is no old Turkey anymore where those self-proclaimed wise, calling themselves intellectual, academic used to rule.⁷¹

The other members of the AKP government supported Erdoğan's anti-intellectualism as part of his polarisation strategy. Environment and Urbanisation Minister, Mehmet Özhaseki, claimed that most 'traitors' – the word for anyone accused of being involved in the July 2016 failed coup attempt – come from the ranks of university graduates: 'Look at the traitors in this country. Most of them are university graduates... The intellectuals are like man-eating cannibals (*yam-yam*), they say anything bad about Turkey both from overseas and at [home]'.⁷²

Anti-intellectualism in the AKP government cannot be proved only by the statements of Erdoğan or the AKP alone. This situation is also understood through the use of policy tools. The government has clamped down on the independence of the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey and the Turkish Academy of Sciences. Most significantly, there has been a significant increase in the number of foundation/private universities (Birler, 2012: 139-150) following the AKP's third term. This neo-liberal restructuring of the higher education sector was inevitably complemented with the articulation of conservative/Islamist symbols as the basis of social construction (Ercan, 2012). The AKP's pressure on the universities will also lead to the presence of Islamists close to the AKP in university administrations. The

⁷¹ <https://bianet.org/english/politics/171334-president-Erdoğan-lumpen-half-portion-intellectual> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁷² <http://independentturkey.org/triumph-anti-intellectualism/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

AKP has maintained an anti-intellectual line of polarisation in the academic world by making an 'us and them' dichotomy. The academics – 'them' - who supported the Gezi Park protests or the peace campaign on the Kurdish issue mentioned above have been oppressed, fired or arrested. Another factor that this chapter has focused on is the *Imam Hatip* schools. After 2011, the AKP continued its policy of polarisation by increasing support for *Imam Hatip* schools. Since 2010-2011, 1,477 general high schools were shut down. The increase in Imam Hatip schools is 73% (Kandiyoti, 2012: 513-531). Vocational high schools have increased by 23% and Anatolian high schools by 57%. The fact that one school type has increased its numbers by 73% reveals the political and bureaucratic will behind opening Imam Hatip schools (Özgür, 2011: 569-585). There is a positive discrimination applied by the AKP government to Imam Hatip schools across the country. This situation cannot be generalised as the AKP's Islamist populism created through religious education will directly lead to anti-intellectualism. However, this strategy has not led to an improvement in the field of education due to the role model of *Imam Hatips* as an alternative to secular schools. For instance, the number of Turkish 15-year-olds who scored below average on the triennial PISA test, which is conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), is three times more than the number of students who scored below average in more successful countries, according to test results (Tansel, 2015: 1-28).

The second important issue for Erdoğan's conservative education policy is the denial of any Ottoman legacy in the educational system against the Kemalist modernisation process. According to Erdoğan, the Kemalist Westernisation process has damaged the notion of the Ottoman-Arabic legacy in education.

Erdoğan said in December 2014 that, due to the alphabet reform that brought in the use of Latin letters conducted by the modern Turkish Republic's founder, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in 1927, the quality of the Turkish language had regressed. 'Although we had a very rich (Ottoman) language that was highly convenient for doing and producing science, we woke up one day and we realised that it was gone. People were forced to forget thousands of words and concepts, as they were

removed from the dictionaries,' he said, arguing it was not possible to study philosophy with the current Turkish vocabulary. 'You will either rely on Ottoman words or concepts from French, English or German. But we have to overcome all of these problems.'⁷³ Following this logic, Turkey's National Education Council introduced mandatory Ottoman language courses at the country's influential religious high schools and are electives in secular high schools (Lüküslü, 2016: 1-14).

This recent rise of anti-intellectualism, characterised by a rejection of commentators as well as institutions like universities and the media that traditionally disseminate knowledge, requires renewed attention. Yet, this is not a new phenomenon. Indeed, the dynamics of anti-intellectualism go as far back as ancient Rome, and tracing its historical roots can offer clues to its rise in world politics today. Erdoğan and the AKP government have been successful representatives of this rising trend in world politics by using anti-intellectualism as a means of polarising Turkish politics with populism.

5.2. Anti-Westernism and Anti Kemalism

When you look at memories from particularly the 1940s, you see the deep contradiction between celebrations of the republic holiday and the nation's state of mind and life. While on one side, the republic holiday celebrations are held with frocks, waltzes and champagne, a nation who is trying to survive with no shoes and no jackets to wear and is half-starved is gazing around at this picture. Following a lengthy struggle, we have eliminated this picture in which the republic is on one side and the public is on the other side because a public exists all together. There is no discrimination among the public," he said. "Just like today, we are all together here," he added, in his speech reminiscent of his well-known rhetoric concerning the single-party rule of the Republican People's Party (CHP)

⁷³<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/were-winning-over-parallels-president-Erdoğan.aspx?PageID=238&NID=76034&NewsCatID=338> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

in the early years of the republic, which he once described as “a dark past filled with brutality and oppression”.⁷⁴

Erdoğan's 29 October celebration speech highlighted the above topics. Especially after 2011, the main axis of the AKP's populism was also a reaction to Kemalist Westernisation and the modernisation process. The AKP and Erdoğan's enemy is Kemalism, secular political parties, and the CHP's mentality and ideology. Therefore, it is logical that the AKP would use this perception of the Kemalist enemy when seeking support from the masses. Aykan Erdemir⁷⁵ concentrates on this issue. Erdemir thinks that Erdoğan's phobia of Kemalism played a prominent role in the AKP's third term. Erdemir talks of another well-known speech from another AKP deputy, Tülay Babuşçu (who is the wife of Aziz Babuşçu). After Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas with an Ottoman-style ceremony in 2014, Babuşçu wrote on her Facebook account that '90 years of adverts' had come to an end and the Ottoman Empire was beginning to resume. Her statements received huge controversy for referring to the Turkish Republic (established approximately 90 years ago in 1923) as '90 years of adverts after 600 years of the Ottoman Empire'.⁷⁶ This emphasis on the Ottoman heritage is also linked to the concept of Ottomanism mentioned in Chapters 2 and 3. Ottomanism is presented as an alternative model against Kemalism which is located on the opposite side of politics. Erdemir discusses that Erdoğan and his group of AKP staff increased his speeches against Kemalism and the CHP mentality in order to control and consolidate their power in the whole country and these attempts are pragmatic from Erdemir's point view⁷⁷.

Along with the criticisms of Westernisation by the AKP and Erdoğan within this anti-Kemalist framework, it has turned to traditionalism in order to keep the

⁷⁴ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/president-puts-his-stamp-on-ceremony-marking-92nd-anniversary-of-republic-of-turkey.aspx?pageID=238&nid=90497&NewsCatID=341> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁷⁵ Dr. Aykan Erdemir is a former CHP member of the Turkish Parliament (2011-2015) and he is an assistant professor at Bilkent University. As an outspoken defender of pluralism, minority rights, and religious freedoms in the Middle East, Dr. Erdemir has been at the forefront of the struggle against religious persecution, hate crimes, and hate speech in Turkey.

⁷⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1158744> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁷⁷ Interview with Aykan Erdemir-Ankara/8 December 2015

foundations of its populist strategy. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan delivered a searing address at the Turkish Green Crescent Society's International Drug Policy and Public Health Symposium in Istanbul. Erdoğan made several headline-making statements during the speech. One highlight was his reference to a European Court of Human Rights ruling that called on Turkey to halt compulsory religious education and moral values courses (Orozco, 2016: 67). Erdoğan criticized the decision as follows: 'You will never see a debate over compulsory physics, mathematics or chemistry lessons, but for some reason, religion classes are always debated. If you lift compulsory religion and ethics classes, drugs, violence, and racism will fill the void.' He added, 'If you are asking for compulsory religion classes to be abolished, then you should not be complaining about drug addiction, violence, anti-Semitism or Islamophobia.'⁷⁸

As seen in Erdoğan's speech, habits like drugs or alcohol are argued to be the cause of the lack of moral values in Turkish society. He believes that this moral degeneration stems directly from the Westernisation process in Turkey. According to Erdoğan, the real solution to this problem is raising the traditionalist Turkish youth on Islamic moral values. In a speech to Turkish graduate students going to study abroad, Erdoğan made some controversial remarks that met with strong reactions in Turkey's mainstream media. Erdoğan said, "The poet who penned the Turkish national anthem (the Islamist Mehmet Akif Ersoy) said that we should compete with the art and science of the West, but unfortunately we adopted the West's immoralities that are contrary to our values."⁷⁹ The main institution in charge of youth policies is the Ministry of Youth and Sports, which was re-established during the AKP's third term. The third AKP government focused on grand symbolic projects and ideological policy changes geared towards the normalisation of Islamist norms and the rewriting of Turkey's national identity (Coşar and Yeğenoğlu, 2011: 555-573). One of the first changes in youth policy in 2011 was to transform mixed summer camps, organised annually by the Ministry's predecessor, the Directorate for Youth Affairs, into gender-segregated camps. Apart from these policies, the Ministry has set up three wars as

⁷⁸<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/10/turkey-iran-afghanistan-drugs-bonzai.html>
(Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁷⁹<http://www.jihadwatch.org/2008/01/turkish-pm-Erdoğan-we-got-the-immorality-from-the-west>
(Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

alternatives to the War of Independence (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*), the greatest narrative of the Kemalist era, and organised celebrations for young people: *Malazgirt*, *Sarıkamış* and *Çanakkale*. Lüküslü (2014: 641) says that these projects aim at creating a new social identity by generalising these new historical markers and by mobilising large numbers of young people. These projects all are characterised by the passive rather than the active participation of young people in their preparation and realisation.

As a result of the AKP's and Erdoğan's conservative traditionalism and anti-Western perspective, there were some developments on this topic between 2011 and 2014. The National Education Council made the following decisions: The proposal to end obligatory education did not make it onto the agenda. The council's general assembly rejected the proposal for obligatory Ottoman-language classes, but eventually moved 'one step forward' by adopting the proposal for compulsory religion classes to start in first grade (Eligür, 2014, 168-169). Also adopted was the proposal to 'teach values' in kindergartens, which calls for children aged 36-72 months to be taught 'the concepts of paradise and hell' imbued with 'love for Allah.' (Lüküslü, 2016: 6-7). Other relatively smaller steps were also adopted. One of them pertains to the obligatory commemoration in schools of 'Holy Birth Week' to mark the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (White, 2014, p.9). Since 1989, Turkey has been the only country where this occasion is marked by state-sponsored commemorations. Another recommendation calls for students memorising the Quran to be exempt from school for two years, rather than one year as it is at present. Another noteworthy recommendation envisages the scrapping of the "alcoholic beverages and cocktail preparation" course in vocational schools training personnel for the tourism sector.⁸⁰

The main argument of this chapter is to increase the rise of populism by using policy tools such as anti-Westernism to ensure the survival of the AKP. The question is; what role did the AKP's survival play in this cause-and-effect mechanism? As stated, the AKP survival is directly related to keep the nominal electorate large. The increasing of anti-Western sceptics in the Turkish citizens was the reason for the

⁸⁰<http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/12/turkey-islamize-education-religion.html> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

understanding of AKP's populist strategy from Anti-Westernism. For instance, public support for Turkey's EU membership declined dramatically. The decline became even steeper as the accession talks began. While the percentage of Turkish citizens who support membership was above 70 per cent in 2004, it dropped below 50 per cent in 2012 (Çarkoğlu and Kentmen, 2011: 368). Specifically, the Turkish people no longer believe that Turkey will 'benefit from being a member of the European Community. The Eurobarometer surveys, which include this question, report that while 62 per cent of respondents thought that membership would be good for Turkey in 2004, in 2012 only one third still considered it a good thing (Bilgin, 2017: 193). Bilgin (2017: 193-194) states that, those who no longer believed EU membership would be good for Turkey did not move to a grey area such as 'neither good nor bad' or 'don't know'; by 2012, the ratio of people who believed it would actually harm Turkey had tripled. The AKP turned this rising trend of Anti-Westernism into a populist strategy for the elections in Turkish politics.

5.3. Conservative Family and Culture Policy

For years, this country has been encouraging birth control; the CHP is doing the same thing now because of the CHP and Kemalist's mentality in the early Republican period. West is collapsing now because the population is aging. You should not be deceived; you must have at least three children. We take all precautions as a state.⁸¹

Erdoğan and the AKP placed the image of a traditional Turkish woman and a conservative family structure against the image of a Western and modern Turkish women from the Kemalist regime. After Erdoğan's speech made in 2011, which criticized the Kemalist regime's women and family policies, the AKP accelerated its policing policy, especially through the image of women and families.

⁸¹ <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/chp-nin-dogum-kontrol-unu-elestirdi-siyaset-1391310/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

One of my interviewees, MHP's Vice-President, Ruhsar Demirel, strongly criticised Erdoğan's discourse on these matters. Erdoğan spoke at a UNDP conference on population and development at the United Nations in 2012, and he said 'there is no difference between killing a baby in its mother's stomach and killing a baby after birth. I consider abortion to be murder. No one should have the right to allow this to happen' (Ünal and Cindoğlu, 2013: 21-31). Demirel was at the same conference due to her profession as a doctor. She said, 'I have never seen such a banal and vulgar speech before. Abortion is not a birth control method, but it is necessary in order to reduce maternal mortality. I have been working in the Health of Ministry for 17 years on this matter and I am very unhappy to blow up our efforts on this issue'.⁸² She claims that Erdoğan and his government damaged the gains of women's rights made during the Turkish Republic and that he has done it using Islamic values. Indeed, abortion is just one of the controversial issues on this matter. Government officials' statements on a woman's right to an abortion in the event of rape have caused outrage. The Supreme Council of Judges and Prosecutors suggested in September of 2011 that women who are rape victims can marry their rapists. On 30 May 2012, Health Minister Recep Akdağ stated that 'The state can look after the babies of the raped women if necessary'. The very next day, Ayhan Sefer Üstün, Chairperson of the National Assembly's Commission of Human Rights and an AKP legislator, claimed that abortion was a crime worse than the rape itself and suggested that women who had been raped should just give birth to their children (Tolunay, 2014: 49). A permit from the state prosecutor allowing an abortion is often demanded from rape victims, even though it is not legally necessary for the doctor to perform the procedure. Due to the elongation of the bureaucratic process, there are cases in which the twenty-week legal abortion period since the rape was committed is exceeded and so the abortion cannot be performed (in many countries this period is 24 weeks) (Yılmaz, 2015: 150-171).

A radical change is observed not only in health policies but also in women's policies, especially after the 2011 elections. At the root of this change is the substitution of the concept of 'family' instead of the image of modern women being among the chief actors of Kemalist modernisation policies. 'Our party is a

⁸² Interview with Ruhsar Demirel- Ankara/ 26th November 2015

conservative democratic party. The family is important to us', told Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, at a press conference held on 9 June 2011 for the announcement of the newly-established ministries, where he declared that the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs was to be replaced by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, prior to the general elections that would take place on 12 June 2011 (Nas, 2016: 168). Erased from the name of the Ministry, women's affairs were reduced to a department under the ministry. While Kemalist modernisation was aimed at increasing the independent role of women in society, the AKP focused on the role of women in the family only after 2011. The AKP elite in this regard tended to implement certain policies under the name of 'social policy' which were indeed reduced to 'family policy' with a bold emphasis on a 'strengthening the family' discourse (Yazıcı 2012: 116). This family discourse reasserts women's traditional gender roles under patriarchal society (Yılmaz 2015: 382). Nas (2016: 16-170) points out that the establishment of 'family advice centres' and 'family education programs' throughout the country under AKP rule illustrates the ways in which political webs of power are being established to function as the technologies of power attaining the AKP's grand narrative of the family.

Another issue of conservative family policy is the lifestyle of Kemalist and secular Turkish people who have not established a family. The AKP government has responded to falling marriage and birth rates due to urbanisation by encouraging marriage and pregnancy through incentives such as giving a 10,000 Turkish Lira interest-free loan to young married couples between 18 and 24 years of age (postponing the repayment if the woman gets pregnant during the first year of marriage), writing off the education debts of the university students, and providing free dormitory rooms if they get married while studying at university (Tolunay, 2014: 49). Just after the government announced these incentives, however, Erdoğan stated that they wouldn't allow male and female university students to stay in the same house because that was 'against society's values' (Kaya, 2015: 57). He said that 'this is against our conservative, democratic character.... We witnessed this in the province of Denizli, an inland town in the Aegean Region. The insufficiency of dormitories causes problems. Male and female university students are living in the same accommodations. This is not being checked' (Kaya, 2015 :58). The day after

that statement, police raided an apartment in Manisa and imposed fines for "disturbing the environment" on five university students (three women who rented the apartment together and two men who were guests there) (Tolunay, 2014: 50). This is a taboo that can be seen in all conservative societies. However, the element that differentiates the AKP example is that the AKP acts strategically. The AKP is much more liberal on this kind of gender issue before 2011. Following the 2011 elections, the AKP has shifted to a more Islamist line by polarising the issue of gender in order to sustain the support of the mass of voters. In the general election polls in 2015, 50 out of every 100 women living in Turkey voted for AKP.⁸³ The increase in the female electorates of AKP's third term is also proof that why the AKP has followed a polarization strategy with a conservative family policies.

Another important issue for the rise of populism in Turkish politics is the location of art and culture in Turkish society. The AKP and Erdoğan have made Western culture, art, and artists tools of their strategy. The AKP and Erdoğan openly targeted artists and celebrities who backed the mass anti-government protests in 2013, vowing 'to bring them to account' (Saleem, 2017: 71). Erdoğan has routinely sued satirists, with his fury recently crossing borders. While government-friendly musicians, actors and writers are frequent guests at Erdoğan's palace, those critical of him and the AKP are never invited. After his 30 March 2014 Election victory, artists spoke out about the censorship of social media that continues unabated. There are many important events that help to understand Erdoğan's conservative reaction to the arts in Turkey. One of them is about the situation of state theatre in Turkey. While they are funded by the nation's money, Erdoğan reasons, the theatre community cannot go against the nation's will, i.e., scripts should be conservative enough for all audiences (Aksoy and Şeyben, 2015: 187). Erdoğan has said he will privatise the state and city theatres. 'We'll sponsor plays if we like the script,' he said (Kösemen, 2016: 70-93). The cultural politics of the AKP is to steer the country's public culture towards a conservative position, in direct opposition to the established instituted secular cultural and identity. 'What is being described as conservative democrat in the political sense', general secretary to President Abdullah

⁸³ <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/politika/327429.aspx> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

Gül, Mustafa İsen asserts, 'should establish the norm for conservative aesthetics and conservative art' (İsen, 2013: 13-20).

As a result of this pressure, the AKP government's authoritarian attitude and censorship continued in the field of culture and arts in a widespread manner in 2014. The AKP is trying to ban and prevent any kind of cultural and artistic studies that do not comply with their own political and cultural values. The application of censorship to documentaries, movies and theatres is gradually increasing. The AKP also implements censorship on reading classical literary works that are contrary to 'Islamic values' (Aksoy and Şeyben, 2015: 189-190). Ercan Karakaş has also noted that 135 cultural events were affected by the repression and censorship applied in the year 2014.⁸⁴ Following of the AKP's conservative family and cultural policies, this chapter will finally review Erdogan's lower class mythology through the White Turks-Black Turks dichotomy in light of the AKP's populist and authoritarian strategy which is the third independent variable of the AKP's political survival.

5.4. Erdoğan's Lower-class Mythology: White Turks vs. Black Turks

The president's backers often cite three main reasons for his popularity and that of his party, the AKP. The first is social: Erdoğan is perceived to be a man of the people, a representative of the lower and lower-middle classes, who felt ignored by his predecessors. 'The thing is, before Erdoğan the presidents didn't value people,' said a man who called himself Ismail, waving an AKP flag. But Erdoğan cares about them. That's the main thing. We see him as one of us.⁸⁵

As seen in this report by the *Guardian*, citizens from the lower-classes in Turkey have supported Erdoğan because they believe that they share some kind of kinship with him. Erdoğan honed his discourse and speeches for the lower-classes to

⁸⁴ <https://chpbrussels.org/2015/02/25/chp-report-on-the-turkish-governments-culture-and-arts-policies-2014-oppression-and-censorship/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁸⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jul/20/we-see-him-as-one-of-us-why-many-turks-still-back-authoritarian-Erdoğan> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

gain their support and has been very successful in realising this goal. The most important notion of Erdoğan's lower-class mythology is the dichotomy of White Turks versus Black Turks. White Turks have come to be associated with an urban cosmopolitan identity, modern feminism, and secularism, while the Black Turk stands for the traditional, the conservative and the lower classes (Çalışkan and Waldman, 2017: 10-11). One columnist, Burak Bekdil claims that Erdoğan's success story is precisely the victory of the Black Turks over the white Turks and illustrates the point with an anecdote about one of 'Tayyip's' supporters:

I saw one of the crowd of paper-tissue-seller-boys at the scooter's seat, pretending to ride it fast. I had to buy a few packs of paper tissues to convince the boy to leave the seat to me. An initial conversation on motorbikes and scooters quickly turned into a 'political chat' with my new, nine-year-old friend. "How much do you earn?" "It depends. Sometimes 5 lira a day, sometimes even 25!" "Fine, but you can't sell paper tissues for all of your life. Any plans for the future?" "Yes, *abi*, I'll fight infidels like you and join 'Uncle Tayyip's' party". "Infidels like me?" "Yes, *abi*, I saw you drinking wine at the café"... One day, the boy said, he would become an MP. I wished him the best of luck. "What does your father do for living?" "No job, *abi*". "Any brothers and sisters?" "We're 12!" "But what makes you so fond of your 'Uncle Tayyip?'" "He is a good Muslim, and he sent us food, toys and other things". "Why do you want to become an MP?" "Because they are rich and powerful, and I can better fight the infidels". "Infidels like me?" "Like you, *abi*."⁸⁶

Bekdil's reminiscence regarding this child is useful to understand Erdoğan's polarisation strategy and his popularity among the lower-classes. Gallup's survey supports Bekdil's anecdote in light of the AKP's populist strategy. This survey indicates that, about six in 10 Turkish adults (59%) interviewed in May and June 2014 approved of the way current Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan -- the front-runner in 2014 presidential election -- is handling his job (Zehra, 2015: 15-20). Majorities in nearly all major sociodemographic groups are satisfied with Erdogan's job

⁸⁶<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/everything-comes-up-roses-for-uncle-tayyip.aspx?pageID=438&n=everything-comes-up-roses-for-uncle-tayyip-2007-08-29> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

performance -- with the exception of university graduates (34%) and the wealthiest Turks (48%). The prime minister's approval rating rises to about two-thirds among Turks with the lowest household incomes (66%) and among residents of rural areas (68%).⁸⁷

According to De Mesquita's selectorate theory, leaders in authoritarian regimes should redistribute wealth to maintain their supporter base and should pay their followers just enough to support them. Although there is an increase in poor people from the lower-classes in Turkey, these people have continued to support Erdoğan's leadership. Even though Turkey's \$800 billion economy is among the 20 biggest in the world, the IMF recently warned that 'it is not built on a sustainable model and remains too vulnerable to dangers outside its borders' (Eligür, 2014: 173-174). Likewise, Standard & Poor's noted that the boom in consumer credit had become a serious risk for Turkish leaders. Indeed, following the U.S. Federal Reserve's announcement of a scale back in its stimulus programme in May 2013, foreign investors were reluctant to lend to emerging markets such as Turkey, and the Turkish lira lost a quarter of its value as a result. Turkey, which has one of the biggest current-account deficits in the world - 7.9%% of GDP in 2013 - was particularly vulnerable. By way of comparison, the current account deficit of South Africa is 5.3%% of GDP, Brazil is 3.6%% of GDP, Indonesia is 3.3%% of GDP, and India is 2.6% of GDP (Eligür, 2014: 174-175). But this worsening economic picture actually, led to an increase in support for the AKP government. Gallup surveys show that many poor Turks have seen improvements in their living standards under Erdogan's watch, a likely factor in his high popularity among this group. While living standards in Turkey have generally improved since 2008 thanks to a quick recovery after the global economic crisis, the poorest 20% of Turks are particularly likely to have grown more satisfied with their living standards -- possibly related to considerable spending on social assistance programs under Erdogan's AKP government. In 2008, 28% of the poorest Turks were satisfied with their standard of living, rising to 48% in 2014.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/174542/six-turks-approve-erdogan-election.aspx> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁸⁸ <http://www.gallup.com/poll/174542/six-turks-approve-erdogan-election.aspx> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

People who could not find a job and whose living standards were dropping voted AKP in the elections. One of the cases of this phenomenon was the March 2014 local elections. Deniz Derviş who volunteered as a ballot monitor in Okmeydanı for the 30 March 2014 local election reported:

I volunteered as a monitor in Okmeydanı (a poor, mixed district of Istanbul). The ballot box I monitored had 120 AKP votes, 95 CHP (main opposition) and 53 HDP (leftist, pro-Kurdish opposition). Yes, there may well have been vote rigging during these elections, in particular in Ankara. But I don't think the total rigged votes could exceed 1% for the whole country. So we are faced economic problems with Gezi and the 17 December corruption tapes at least 40% of people are still happy with the AKP. We should also note that the voter-turnout was 90%, whereas it was 85% in 2009.”⁸⁹

This situation also continued at the 2014 presidential elections, the end point of this research. Although all the opposition parties nominated candidates against Erdoğan, Erdoğan was elected President with a result above the numbers votes the AKP had received in 2002, taking 52% of the votes. Many scholars asked the same question: ‘Who still supports Turkey’s AKP’? Academic, Pinar Tremblay says that, ‘uneducated poor masses vote for the AKP because they still feel they belong to the AKP and believe in Erdoğan’.⁹⁰ CHP İstanbul Deputy, Eren Erdem supports this argument. Erdem thinks that the power of Erdogan came from his charisma and popularity with Anatolian rural people. Erdem says that ‘if you are a hit with rural people in Anatolia, they will support you. Erdogan is very successful in this, but CHP is not’.⁹¹ Erdem argues that CHP and other leftist political parties have excluded Anatolian people’s religious beliefs for many years, and Erdogan was aware of this and changed his discourse to raise his power.

⁸⁹ <http://turkishawakening.com/2014/04/01/a-ballot-monitors-tale/> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁹⁰ <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/03/Erdoğan-akp-support-popularity-turkey-scandal-corruption.html> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

⁹¹ Interview with Eren Erdem- Ankara/ 18th November 2015.

This research agrees with Tremblay's view and aims to explore the reason of this phenomenon. It argues that the main reason for this support is the notion of the AKP's and Erdoğan's policies with his lower-class metaphors and the perennially useful Black Turks-White Turks dichotomy. This situation provided for the survival and electoral success of the AKP. Data from an exit poll conducted during the 30 March 2014 local elections demonstrates a negative relationship between income and support for the AKP. Those in the lowest income group (less than 700 Turkish Lira per month) voted AKP over the CHP by a 42% to 18% margin. However, 40% of those in the highest income bracket (more than 3,000 Turkish Lira per month) voted CHP, compared to 30% for the AKP (Tillman, 2014: 4). In short, the conservative AKP relies heavily on support from lower-class voters, while the self-described social democratic CHP relies on support from middle-class voters. On the one hand, White Turks and the middle-class are concerned about the AKP's Islamist style of governance. On the other hand, the AKP's supporters, who are the members of lowest income group in Turkey, considers a victory against the White Turks polarise a victory against the enemy. At the same time, this polarisation also obliges the AKP to take a more Islamist position so that it can survive and not lose voter support (Çalışkan and Waldman, 2016: 10-11). The '*zenci*' (Black Turks) metaphor that the AKP and leader Erdoğan used against 'White Turks' plays an important role in the AKP's polarisation strategy.

Erdoğan uses the term '*zenci*' in most of his speeches and always claims that he is proud to be a *zenci* like other lower-class citizens in Turkey. Following the AKP's second term, Erdoğan began to treat uneducated people as 'Black Turks', like himself. White Turks are seen as the well-educated, well-to-do Kemalist elites fashioning themselves on (some of) Atatürk's ideas. They are often associated with state bureaucracy and the military. Black Turks are those who the White Turks despise as poorly-educated, lower-class and either still peasants in Anatolian or rural areas or unable to shake off their peasant heritage (Demiralp, 2012: 511-512).

Peasants or people who live in Anatolian villages are complete 'Black Turks' in Erdoğan's classification because these people were pressurised by Kemalist elites

during the early Republican period. 'White Turks' and Kemalist elites have always mocked them due to their uneducated/conservative identity. This article gives an example of Erdoğan's *mukhtar* (local head person in villages) meetings for understanding this phenomenon. Since January 2015, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has delivered monthly speeches to mukhtars, invited in groups to his presidential palace in Ankara. At the first meeting he said that;

They were mocking me and all my mukhtar brothers by saying 'He cannot even be a mukhtar'. However, this nation elected me deputy, made me the Prime Minister and then elevated me to the office of Presidency by making me the first directly-elected President of the Republic of Turkey. I would like to sincerely express that being elected by the nation is one of the highest, greatest honors of this world. Being honored by the trust of this nation is really the highest rank of all whether you are a mukhtar or a mayor or a deputy or the President. Our mukhtar brothers, who are elected by the people, are in an extremely important office. The vision to become a great state begins with the local administrations. If the perspective and direction of the country does not match with the perspective of our smallest administrative unit, our villages and neighbourhoods, we cannot achieve a healthy growth.⁹²

Overall, Erdoğan's lower-class mythology helped to consolidate and polarise his voters especially after 2011. Moreover, it also contributed to his success at the Presidential Elections in 2014. Indeed, the lower-class population is far larger numerically than the upper classes in Turkey and Erdoğan is well aware of this. He has used both conservative and traditionalist discourses addressed to the lower-classes in such a way as to maintain the loyalty of the mass electorate.

Use of this strategy to ensure the survival of the AKP and to protect its voter base also increased the appearance of populism and authoritarianism in Turkish politics. Throughout the chapter, we have examined the populism that the AKP has increased in an authoritarian manner. It is not wrong to say that conservative policies

⁹² <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/3406/president-Erdoğan-addresses-to-mukhtars-the-vision-to-become-a-great-state-begins-at-the-local-level.html> (Accessed Date: 01/07/2017)

have increased visibly in this period as populism, especially on the Kemalist and secular sectors. This study, however, does not consider this situation as the rise of Islamism. The policy tools we use primarily as intervening variable's are a product of a direct populist policy understanding rather than an Islamist policy understanding. Also, one of the arguments alleged in this study is that the AKP's conservative rhetoric of this period does not match the Islamist policy line in the true sense. One of the most important evidence that will support this argument is the Islamists' line of interviews with politicians.

So what did those who regard themselves as Islamists think when confronted with this picture? In fact, many Islamists' opinions are that current Islamism has been damaged by the AKP's pragmatic and populist approach to religion. Interviews with some Islamist politicians suggest that Islamism has been used by the AKP hypocritically for its own survival.

5.5. The Rise of Hypocritical Islamists in Turkey

A theatre academy founded by a Kemalist artist, Müjdat Gezen, was set alight in Istanbul in 2017, adding to the atmosphere of fear and intimidation in the build-up to the constitutional referendum. Gezen, an outspoken critic of the ruling Justice and Development Party, has long been a target for Islamists and conservative supporters of the government, with *Yeni Akit*, a conservative pro-government newspaper, reporting the attack as a 'huge shock to pimp Gezen' on its Twitter account. After being detained by the police, it emerged that the suspected arsonist was also a strong supporter of President Erdoğan, regularly posting content with religious and conservative themes on social media. But with little sense of irony, he claims to have little memory of the crime, which he says was carried out under the influence of alcohol.⁹³

⁹³<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/arson-attack-staged-on-theater-academy-in-istanbul-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=109948&NewsCatID=509> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

This profile is typical of a certain brand of ‘hypocritical’ Islamism that has emerged in recent years under the AKP. Despite the explicit prohibition of both drinking and hate speech in Islam, opponents of the government can be drunkenly attacked and denounced as ‘pimps’ by those who are loudest in their so-called religious devotion.

As discussed in Chapter 2, the AKP learnt important lessons from *Milli Görüş*’s difficult history. Rejecting the Welfare Party’s anti-Western ideology, the party’s leaders instead emphasized individual rights and freedoms in the Western mould. Such efforts to ‘modernise’ the movement were initially welcomed by many Islamists. However, this began to wane after the AKP’s victory in the 2011 elections. With the party’s political position was secured in the face of little opposition, it began a move away from an emphasis on individual rights and democracy, and then Prime Minister Erdoğan began to exert control over the party in a way that began to increasingly resemble Erbakan’s domineering leadership. Interestingly, this did not mean that the AKP returned to the Islamism of its *Milli Görüş* roots, according to my interviewees from Islamist politics. Rather, it created a seemingly new kind of Islamism that increasingly resembled crony capitalism, leading to serious criticism from within the *Milli Görüş* tradition (Gürhanlı, 2014: 1-6).

Before examining the views of these Islamist politicians on the AKP’s hypocritical Islamism, this research will present an interview conducted with a group of students who are interested in politics. This meeting included around 20 students from many departments⁹⁴. The two radical Islamist students at this meeting did not accept the idea of ‘Erdoğan’s leadership in the Muslim world’. They criticised the AKP and Erdoğan’s policies in terms of Islamic values. They said that if the rise of Islamism has been realised by Erdoğan, the Turkish state would ban alcohol or punish adultery. If Erdoğan were faithful to his religion, he would not try to create good relations with Israel or the United States, according to them.

⁹⁴ Group meeting with Bilkent University Political Thought Group- Ankara/25th November

One of the students mentioned quotes from Erdoğan's speeches such as 'girls and boys should not live together' and he believes that these speeches are only pragmatic arguments for Erdoğan. He indicates⁹⁵ that they have never seen any regulations about this matter or about banning alcohol even though Erdoğan is against its use. Another gave an example of Erdoğan's speech in Egypt⁹⁶. In 2011 Erdoğan called on Egyptians to adopt a secular constitution, noting that secularism does not mean renouncing religion. This student claims that, on the one hand, Erdoğan has made many speeches against secularism in the past and present, but on the other hand he has made many others about the importance of secularism. He points out that Erdoğan's discourse has many dilemmas and contradictions within it due to his political interest in both domestic and foreign politics.

Some of the students had a different perspective about this issue⁹⁷. One of them worked in the one of the AKP's youth branches before and had left the AKP due to the setting up of the AKP's own cadre in public office. Another student claims that if you do not prostrate yourself in prayer (*secde*), you cannot work in public office. One student related his memory of the Canadian ambassador, who said to him: "the Turkish ambassadors in foreign countries do not go to meetings due to the AKP's pressure".⁹⁸ Although there are negative developments concerning the rise of conservatism and authoritarianism in Turkey, these students were not sure that there is a strict conservatism or 'real Islamism' in Turkish society. However, one of the female students focused on a very important issue. She pointed out that there has been no quantitative increase of conservative/religious people in Turkish society, but instead that the conservative people in Turkey have become more Islamic and more authoritarian due to Erdoğan's Islamist and authoritarian profile.

Despite the AKP's remarkable record of gaining and holding political office – an achievement that most Turkish Islamists would have once considered impossible – there are those in the movement who have argued that such success is no longer

⁹⁵ Group meeting with Bilkent University Political Thought Group- Ankara/25th November

⁹⁶ Group meeting with Bilkent University Political Thought Group- Ankara/25th November

⁹⁷ Group meeting with Bilkent University Political Thought Group- Ankara/25th November

⁹⁸ Group meeting with Bilkent University Political Thought Group- Ankara/25th November

advancing 'real' Islamism. Much of the Welfare Party's support was built in the rural areas of Anatolia and in the shanty towns of newly-arrived immigrants in the big cities, where it benefited from popular discontent after a series of economic crises as well as the growth of Islamic revivalism against the authoritarian secularism of the preceding decades. It had a strong message of social and economic justice.

One important *Milli Görüş* figure, Mehmet Bekaroğlu, asked in the interviews; 'If there is a 13-year Islamist government in Turkey, how can we explain non-Islamic civilisation and urbanisation in the big cities? The AKP has built huge blocks and big malls in the cities rather than functional buildings'.⁹⁹ According to this view, Erdoğan increasingly uses Islamism as a tool for his personal political interests, paying lip service to religious ideals only when it suits him. Another *Milli Görüş* politician, Abdüllatif Şener, who was once a leading member of the AKP, expressed his disappointment;

I prepared for the AKP party programme to make my dreams come true in Turkish politics, as I'd like to show the compatibility between Islam and democracy in Turkey from their viewpoint. However, Erdoğan has not been successful on this goal. There are many corruption scandals among the AKP government. So, I ask, how can you explain these corruption scandals if you use Islam or Islamic values? Because of this, I left AKP in 2007, although Abdullah Gül and Erdoğan would like to see me in AKP's staff. I consider the AK Party not as an Islamic party but as a party which collect votes by using Islamic discourses. Just like this, I do not consider Erdoğan as a person thinking by Islamic way, I also do not believe that he has Muslim susceptibility. His way of policy making fits neither Islam nor humanity nor national interests.¹⁰⁰

After the 2013 corruption scandal, some of Erdoğan's supporters defended their leader using religious logic, appealing to the Islamic principle of free will. An AKP parliamentarian, Metin Külünk, argued on the pro-government television channel *Habertürk TV* that: 'individuals have (various) areas of freedom; Allah has given man

⁹⁹ Interview with Mehmet Bekaroğlu- Ankara/ 11th November 2015

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Abdüllatif Şener-Ankara/26th November 2015

the freedom to sin ... Allah says, I created human beings able to commit sins and repent. You are interfering with the freedom of people to commit sins' (Gürcan and Peker, 2015: 141-160). With little space for opposition even within the Islamist movement itself, society is becoming increasingly dominated by government loyalists, whose lifestyles are often contrary to Islamic values, but who suppress the freedoms of others in the name of Islam.

As seen in Şener and Bekaroğlu's criticism against Erdoğan's hypocritical Islamism, there have been many negative developments for Islam under the AKP's rule. CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu summarised this phenomenon in his one of the group meetings in the Turkish Assembly:

Leaders have a duty. Presidents have a duty. Ministers have a duty. They have to set a model for society. If you give up setting a model for the society and dissociate it, then you leave the society face to face with this degeneration. If the president of a country doesn't abide by the oath that he took, then he cannot be a model for the society and he nourishes the degeneracy in the society. They have nourished the degeneracy in society for 13 years in this way. They talked about religion and faith. In which religion does morality have a second-class position? Why have suicide cases increases? There has been a 33% increase. Drugs that have spread in last 13 years have become trouble for Turkey. Increase in drug addiction is 678%. The increase in those jailed for drug trade is 355%. There is 790% increase in prostitution. More than 300,000 women are being held by prostitution gangs like slaves. What is this Justice and Development Party is doing, can you tell me? Where is justice here? Where is the development here?¹⁰¹

The abuse of Islam in this way also affected Turkish society in a similar way. HDP *Diyarbakır* Deputy, İmam Taşçier, gives an example to demonstrate this view. On the friendly football match between Turkey and Greece, chants of '*Allahu Akbar*' were reportedly heard in Istanbul as some Turkey fans shamefully booed a pre-

¹⁰¹ <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/chp-leader-turkey-suffering-from-moral-collapse.aspx?pageID=517&nID=94382&NewsCatID=338> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

match minute's silence for the victims of the Paris terrorist attacks.¹⁰² Like Taşçier, another HDP deputy and Kurdish Islamist politician, Hüda Kaya, was aware of this event. According to Kaya, Erdoğan identifies himself as 'a leader of Muslim people'.¹⁰³ As a result, Erdoğan's supporters take courage from his mission and most of the conservative people in Turkey have become more Islamicised like Erdoğan. Kaya believes that Muslim identity was always abused by Erdoğan and the AKP government.

6. Conclusion

Chapter 4 focuses on the third term of the AKP, which is a real turning point in the rise of populism in Turkey. This chapter examines how the AKP's populist strategy influenced the cause of the survival of the AKP. As we have already mentioned, De Mesquita's selectorate theory is limited as a means of explaining the connection of causality between the AKP's survival and the rise of Islamism, especially in the party's third term. Although the condition of keeping the nominal selectorate large is relevant to the AKP's survival and the rise of Islamism, Turkey has not evolved into a typical dictatorship as postulated in De Mesquita's case examples. Moreover, the lack of political actors' leadership skills or motivations and De Mesquita's explanations of political survival from a more economic perspective are the weaknesses of his theory in this case. At this point, the rise of populism between 2011 and 2014 is connected to the survival of the AKP and the support of the electorate.

Hence, the impending question is how the AKP gained the support of the majority of voters. The answer to this question also shows the third independent variable of the AKP's political survival. Chapter 4 focuses on the AKP's populist strategy which can be further expressed as the third independent variable to reveal the causal mechanism of the AKP's survival in Turkish politics. At this point, the AKP carried out a populist strategy between secular and conservative citizens in Turkey

¹⁰² Interview with İmam Taşçier- Ankara/ 24th November 2015

¹⁰³ Interview with Hüda Kaya- Ankara/ 2nd December 2015

and consolidated the support of conservative voters for the AKP. The bridge between these two variables – the rise of populism in Turkish politics and the AKP's political survival - is established with various policy tools such as anti-intellectualism, anti-Westernism, traditionalism, and lower-class mythology.

In this chapter, the period between 2011 and 2014 was explored in detail with the cause-and-effect relationship between AKP's populism and its political survival. In this respect, the example of how this populist point of view contributed to this, while was succeeding at the point of ensuring the survival of the AKP with the March 2014 local elections and 2014 Presidential Election. In particular, the results of the 2014 Presidential Election prompted the AKP government and leader Erdogan to demand the adoption of a new political line-up in the post-2014 period. As emphasized in De Mesquita's selectorate theory, the nominal selectorate from one side was kept large while the winning coalition from the other was getting smaller. The results of the 2014 presidential election demonstrated that the Fethullah Gülen Movement and the Kurdish movement were no longer possible in the position of two important forces in the winning coalition of the AKP. In order to be able to carry out this conflict with these two actors on a political level, the AKP would put forward a combination of Islamism and nationalism, leading to a much more nationalist streak of political struggle. The next chapter, Chapter 5, explores how this transformation takes place and how this Islamist-nationalist combination affects the cause of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2014 and 2018.

Chapter 5: The Instrumentalisation of Islamism and Nationalism under Erdogan's Leadership (2014-2018)

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, this study examines that the first steps of a populist authoritarianism have begun with the AKP's third period after 2011. It is an undeniable fact that this process continues in the post-2014 period. Nevertheless, there are two significant differences in analysing the political survival of the AKP between the post-2014 period and the period of 2011-2014. Firstly, the Kurds and Fethullah Gulen movement, which took place in the AKP's winning coalition until 2014 were eliminated from Turkish politics by AKP after 2014. The second factor is the Erdogan's leadership, which seeks to take over the power of the AKP in the party structure and control the Turkish politics with the presidential system after April 2017 referendum.

These two factors have led to another cause-and-effect mechanism developed by the AKP to protect its political survival. As mentioned earlier in De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory, it was necessary to consolidate the voters' base to keep the nominal selectorate as large as possible. After the AKP lost the Kurds and Fethullah Gulen Movements' support, it would begin to pursue a policy combination of Islamism and nationalism in the framework of Erdogan's leadership. The positive results of this policy would also be taken during the November 2015, April 2017 referendum and last June 2018 elections, and the political survival of the AKP would have been preserved in the recent period.

Chapter 5 will first examine the AKP-Gulen Movement conflict and the AKP-Kurds conflict, whose relations were collapsed after the 2014 presidential elections and the 2015 elections. In this context, how the Kurdish movement and the Fethullah Gülen has affected the AKP's political survival until 2014 will be examined in this chapter. In the chapter, AKP-Kurdish movement conflict and AKP-Gülen movement

conflict will be examined in two separate sub-sections, and the effect of this conflict on the survival of AKP will be analysed in light of the elections after 2014. In this context, it will be examined on how the AKP has formed a coalition of ideas as a new winning coalition in the plane of Islamism and nationalism, acting with the ideology of 'native and national' (*yerli ve milli*), and how this understanding contributes to the protection of AKP's political survival.

2. The Clash of Islamists: AKP vs Fethullah Gülen Movement

In the previous chapter, this research tried to summarise the relationship of the AKP with Fethullah Gülen Movement without getting into details. In this context, it was stated that the AKP established in 2001 had a close relationship with the Fethullah Gülen movement in the context of founding staff and ideology of the establishment. This position of the Gülen movement could also be considered as a member of the large winning coalition in the early period of the AKP. This strategic partnership between the AKP and the Gülen movement lasted between 2002 and 2012, and in 2013 and beyond, this coalition was collapsed and an unrelenting struggle between the Gülen movement and the AKP began. Although this study has described the previous chapter as a period between 2011 and 14 and discussed the beginning of the AKP-Gülen conflict in this process, we believe that this conflict would accelerate and affect the political survival of the AKP after 2014. Before doing this review, it would be useful to give a summary of where and how the Fethullah Gülen Movement was born.

2.1. The History of Gülen Movement

Fethullah Gülen was born in the village of Korucuk (Bakar, 2005: 359-372), of Erzurum (what is Eastern Turkey) on April 27, 1941. He received a Quranic education from his parents early on in his life. His mother first taught Gülen the Quran, and his father taught him Arabic, as well as the works of Islamic scholars

(Saritoprak and Griffith, 2005:329-340). Along with the education from his parents, Gülen also studied under Qadiri Sufi sheikh Muhammad Lutfi Efendi, who is said to have profoundly shaped Gülen's life and outlook on Islam (Saritoprak and Griffith, 2005). Also, Gülen and his movement also came out of the influence of Said Nursi and the Nursi movement.

In 1958, Gülen began working as a vaiz (state-paid religious imam) in the city of Edirne. After having worked in this role for many years, in 1966 he was given the job of being the DIB preacher (The Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) in Izmir. Along with serving in this role, he also devoted time to the Kestanepazari Qur'an School in the city (Yavuz, 2003:181). Specifically, he began educating students on his ideas about Islam, the role of community, as well as civic engagement. Here he ran summer camps where children would be taught secular as well as religious subjects. These camps functioned as much more than small classrooms for the dissemination of knowledge. As Yavuz (2003) explains,

...[o]ne sees the process of deepening private religious consciousness and the development of new and narrow Islamic fraternization among the participants of the camps. The students lived together within an atmosphere of sincerity and were tutored in a shared language of Islamic morality to form a common map of action. These camps... were spaces for deepening inner consciousness for public use and were the networks of the formation of a powerful sense of religious brotherhood in order to bring Islamic values into the public. The first generation followers of Gülen internalized Islamic values of responsibility, selfsacrifice, and dedicating oneself to the collective good of the Muslim community" (Yavuz, 2003: 182).

Thus Gülen began to educate a group of students who – following their education with him – would go onto dispersing such ideas in civil society (Yavuz 2003: 182). While he was actively teaching these students, the politics of the state affected him; during the 1971 coup, he, along with many other followers of Said Nursi were arrested for "the violation of article 163, which criminalizes 'unwanted' religious

expression and association” (Yavuz, 2003b:182–183). While he was not found guilty, he did end up spending seven months in jail, until the verdict was reached. After his arrest, he continued to focus on his message of education. He did this by organising the “Foundation of Turkish Teachers”, as well as the “Foundation of Middle and Higher Education” in Akyazi in 1976. He also concentrated on writing. In 1979, his *Sızıntı* magazine was first published (Yavuz, 2003b:183), and the newspaper *Zaman* came out beginning in 1986 (Yavuz, 2003b). However, Gülen found more freedom to operate in the 1980s, when he began working with politicians (such as Prime Minister Halil Turgut Özal) on education, as well as social and cultural issues in Turkish society. And in 1983, the opening of the education system allowed the Hizmet movement to increase their education-based activities. This, coupled with support from Özal (who removed the arrest warrant for Gülen years back) (Yavuz 2003a: 37), allowed Gülen to increase his activities in education (Yavuz 2003b: 183).

With the movements increasing popularity in society, despite Gülen’s attempts to not weigh in on controversial issues (Yavuz,2003b), to not minimize the role of the state in the country (Yavuz, 2003a), as well as having the increased support by President Demirel, along with Prime Minister Ecevit (Yavuz, 2003a: 43), nevertheless the movement attracted the attention of some members of the military, as well as some secular currents in the state. Specifically, in 1999, Gülen was a major concern for some members of the military, as well as some of the secularists, when they began to see some of Gülen’s recordings being played on national television. Overall, there were some concerns with Gülen and the Hizmet movement by the military and others, which Özdalga (2005) summarizes as follows:

- i. Fethullah Gülen is trying to infiltrate important state institutions like the judiciary, the police and the military.
- ii. The purpose behind that is to prepare the ground for a seizure of state power.
- iii. The struggle for the final takeover of the state has been going on for a long time and takes place in great secrecy.

- iv. Fethullah Gülen's strategy is to pretend that he and his adherents fully favour Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the existing regime, while in reality he is preparing himself and his followers for an Islamist revolution.
- v. What is so disturbing about Gülen is that he has been so skilful in hiding his real purposes from the public.
- vi. Fethullah Gülen controls "gigantic" (korkunç) sums of money. How and where these resources are appropriated is unknown. Since he lives in the United States, it is hinted that he is supported by this superpower (allegedly to undermine the interests of his native Turkey).
- vii. In the schools, dormitories and home-like student houses (ııık evleri) set up in the name of Gülen, students are pressured to accept his teachings (brainwashed).
- viii. Gülen and his adherents constitute a greater threat to the regime than either the Kurdish "terror organisation" PKK and Abdullah Öcalan or the Welfare Party and its most militant demagogue İevket Yılmaz. The fact that the Welfare Party functions openly must count in its favour compared to Gülen's secretiveness" (439–440).

The discussion or examination of whether all concerns or criticisms of the Gülen community that Özdalga mentions is true or not may be the subject of another research. However, the aim of the Gülen community to have influence in the state administration is an undeniable fact in relation to the AKP's political survival. Hakan Yavuz expresses this situation as follows;

The Gülen followers evolved through three major stages of development: a communitarian network of piety [cemaat]; education-cum-media global movement [hareket], and a secret religiopolitical configuration commonly referred to as a 'parallel structure of the state' [parallel yapı], with the goal of controlling the mechanisms of the state. The Gülenists gradually shed their faith-oriented activities, involving themselves in conquering secular spaces by articulating a new Islamic discourse, which stressed 'service' [hizmet] to humanity, rigorous educational standards for a new generation who eventually would rule the country, and involvement in strategic economic sectors to leverage new financial

and market power. These complex networks in the movement operated less upon generally accepted standards of ethical communication and advocacy than on a winner-takes-all political objective. The Gülenist attempt to control the state bureaucracy was also supported by a large segment of conservative Turkish society, which regularly complained about the heavyhanded policies of the state bureaucracy. The Gülen movement penetrated state institutions, gaining control only by the will of the AK Party. (Yavuz, 2018: 20).

As Yavuz mentioned, a strategic partnership was established between the AKP and the Gulen community, on the one hand, to provide the survival of the AKP, and on the other side to reinforce the Gulen community within the state. How this partnership in this chapter will affect the survival of the AKP by 2014 and how it has succeeded in keeping the nominal selectorate large by the policies followed by the AKP along with the conflict that emerged in the post-2014 period.

2.2. A strategic alliance of necessity between AKP and Gülen Movement

As you know I have read and always shared the ideas of Said Nursi and I am a follower of the Risale-i Nur. The Gülen movement also evolved out of the Nur movement. When I became minister, we did not have any supporters in the bureaucracy except the Gülenists. So they helped us to get to know the ministries and run them because the secularists and nationalists were using every means to show us as incompetent. The only group we had to rely on was the Gülenists. Thanks to them we survived the siege of the Kemalists and secured the constitutional referendum. (Yavuz, 2018: 23)

These statements were published by Hakan Yavuz's interview with the former minister of education, who observed and approved the efforts of the Gülenists to control the ministry. In Chapter 2, which this study has discussed in the first period of the AKP, it has stated that the AKP has developed close relations with the Fethullah Gülen Movement during its establishment. In this regard, the intellectual connection between the AKP and the Gulen movement can be illustrated through the Abant

Platform meetings, a forum in which invited academics, civil society leaders, and politicians gather to discuss issues related to the Turkish society, international affairs, and Islam (Demiralp, 2016). Past meeting topics have included “Islam and Secularism,” “Religion, State, and Society,” and “Pluralism and Social Compromise” (Muedini, 2015: 99-122). An official we interviewed from an affiliated Gülen organisation, the Journalists and Writers Foundation (*Gazeteciler ve Yazarlar Vakfı*, GYV) explained the informal connection between the Gülen Movement and AKP;

The first Abant meeting was about Islam and secularism. Because it was the first time people from different sectors came together, there were intense debates. The intensity reached a point where there was almost a fight. But everyone took advantage of each other’s knowledge. Many people who were founding members of the AKP attended these meetings, and they openly declared that they learned a lot from these experiences. Some people say that if a radical Islamist party has moved to the center today—a party like AKP—in this, the Abant meetings have been influential. As far as I know, there are seven or eight ministers in the cabinet, also the president, Abdullah Gül, who have attended our meetings more than two or three times. Also Professor Mehmet Aydın, the Minister of State, was the Secretary General of the Abant Platform, and then he was the President of the Abant Platform for six years (Özler and Sarkissian, 2009: 22).

From this point of view, the coalition between the AKP and the Gülen Movement started in 2002. However, it should not be forgotten that in the first period of the AKP, which was established with a large coalition, Fethullah Gülen Movement was a small part of this coalition. Of course, the results of the AKP and Gülen partnership in this period also reflected in Turkish politics. On 25 August 2004, the military-dominated National Security Council (MGK), which included then Prime Minister Erdoğan and select AKP cabinet members, signed an advisory ruling on ‘measures needed to be taken to counter activities by the Fethullah Gülen Movement and asked the government to draw up an action plan (Taş, 2018: 1-19). Specifically, in 2005 and 2007 AKP rejected two notices of motion given by the main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP), to investigate what it coined ‘F-type Organisation’, with F referring to Gülen’s first name (Taş, 2017:

1-8). This formidable alliance was capable of stifling legal manoeuvres aimed at finishing off each group. Following the institution of EU-oriented liberal changes to the Counterterrorism Law on 5 May 2006, the Ankara Criminal Court acquitted Fethullah Gülen of subverting the secular regime (Muedini, 2015). Hakkı Taş explains why and how this alliance's necessity is important for both actors;

Despite the public perception that there was an inherent partnership between AKP and the Gülenists in this period, the relationship could be best described as a strategic alliance in pursuit of mutual benefits. The newfound political and strategic affinity enabled both groups to set aside their differences. First, declaring a clear break from its predecessors, AKP (as the Gülenists did) refrained from antagonizing the state elite with challenges to secularism. Second, both actors now shared a pro-Western agenda that sought to promote Turkey's European Union membership process and market liberalization. Third, AKP and GM combined their complementary forces as a means of surviving the hostile secular environment. While AKP benefited from GM's educated human capital in state bureaucracy, GM found the opportunity to expand further across social, economic, and bureaucratic fields (Taş, 2017:3).

As the Hakkı Taş stated, the needs of both actors were at the same time forming a coalition. This coalition began to build its first building blocks between 2002 and 2007, and after 2007, this coalition would begin to move on a different footing. As mentioned in Chapter 3, De Mesquita predicts that Selectorate Theory faces various threats or risks to the political survival of leaders or political parties. In this context, the AKP faced two threats after 2007. AKP survived the military's indirect intervention on 27 April 2007, known as the 'e-memorandum', and the 2008 closure case in the Constitutional Court. Nevertheless, unlike the 28 February Process, the AKP was more confident this time and carried out a counter-offensive policy to ensure its political survival.

As De Mesquita mentioned, the AKP's winning coalition began to shrink, and at the same time, Fethullah Gülen Movement became a very critical member of this coalition by directly protecting the AKP from these two threats. As mentioned in

Chapter 3, the AKP has taken action to eliminate especially the Kemalists from Turkish politics. In this context, the biggest contributor of the AKP's policies would be the Fethullah Gülen Movement because it would become an important opportunity for the movement to gain power in the Turkish state. The first attempt in this context would be the *Ergenekon* investigation.

Gülenist Prosecutors, supported by leading members of the governing Justice and Development Party (AKP), have accused military officers and their supposed civilian accomplices with membership in a secret network, dubbed the '*Ergenekon* terror organisation' after an ancient Turkish myth. The prosecutors have charged them with crimes ranging from bombings to intimidation of religious minorities and coup plots. The *Ergenekon* investigation along with an alleged coup plot codenamed Sledgehammer has ensnared hundreds of current and retired Kemalist military officers, journalists, academics, and lawyers, as well as a chief prosecutor and even a former mayor of Istanbul (Rodrik, 2011: 99-109).

As explained in Chapter 3, the illegality that has taken place during the *Ergenekon* and Sledgehammer trials and the pressure of the AKP has started to build on the Kemalist and secular segments of society in particular. At this point, the Fethullah Gülen Movement would feel more power in Turkish politics by managing the struggle directly with the Kemalists, and it would target the names of opposition figures. Ruşen Çakır (2012) and Dani Rodrik (2011) convey the different roles of the Gülen Movement in this process with the examples.

In this respect, the first example to be given is the former police chief, Hanefi Avcı. Avcı was a nationalist-conservative Chief of Police who specialised in the intelligence part of the fight against terrorism. He was considered to be somebody who is not distant from the Gülen movement. However, Avcı, as an insider, put forward very strong claims for the organisation of the community within the Turkish National Police by giving names and describing events. As a result of this, his book was a best-seller in a concise time. However, even though Avcı had been fighting

against terrorism for years, he was arrested and put on trial for being affiliated with a radical leftist movement, called “The Revolutionary Base”. Following this, he was also included in the OdaTV case and it was claimed that he had a relationship with Ergenekon (Çakır, 2012: 19). To a large extent, it can be said that the public thinks that Avcı had been silenced through investigations and trials by exactly the same people against whom he was fighting. Indeed, after a while, the journalist, Ahmet Şık, known to be preparing a book on the organisation of the community within the police, was also taken into custody and the police confiscated copies of the work-in-progress on different computers. Despite this, the book was published on the Internet, temporarily entitled ‘The Army of the Imam’, and following this, it attracted a lot of attention when it was published with the title, ‘Whoever Touches it Burns’ (*Dokunan Yanar*) (Rodrik, 2011: 100).

Another journalist, who was arrested on the same day as Şık was Nedim Şener, who had researched and shed light on the negligence of the state officials in the murder of the Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink. Therefore, he had disturbed some of the chiefs of police that were suggested to be affiliated with the Gülen movement (Çakır, 2012: 19-20). After his arrest, it was claimed that this hostility was present behind it, and, therefore the Gülen movement. In the course of events, during the Ergenekon process, this was the second big break after the incident of Prof. Türkan Saylan, Director of The Support for Modern Life Association. Namely, it was thought that Professor Saylan was included in the investigation mainly because she was running a rival educational establishment to that of the Gülen movement (Kuzmanoviç, 2012: 171-185). In other words, this investigation was seriously clouded with the possibility that highly influential members of the Gülen community were, at the same time, settling up their own accounts in the cases of Professor Saylan, Şık-Şener during the Ergenekon process.

Apart from these examples; the manifestation of the links between the prosecutors carrying out the investigations with the Fethullah Gülen movement and the manipulative news of the media organisations connected to the Gülen movement during the Ergenekon-Sledgehammer investigations show how the Gülen community

contributed to the survival of the AKP in this process. As a result of these operations in the 2nd term of the AKP, Gulen Movement was going to be the important partner of this coalition, while TÜSİAD, some western actors, some sections from the centre-right were leaving AKP's winning coalition. In this process, the Gülen support in the 2010 constitutional referendum would play a much more crucial role in the AKP's survival.

The alliance peaked during the constitutional referendum of 12 September 2010, which altered the composition of the judicial bodies and ultimately broke the secularist hold on the judiciary. With Fethullah Gülen personally campaigning for Turkish citizens to cast affirmative votes in the referendum, Erdoğan extended gratitude to those 'beyond the ocean' (*okyanus ötesi*), an intra-community reference to Gülen (Taş, 2017: 4). As discussed above, after the 2002 national elections, the Gülen community and the AK Party gradually merged, with the Gülenists working more than as mere functionaries of the AK Party branches in provinces across the country. By 2010, the Gülenists became the dominant group within AK Party. Hayati Yazıcı, an AK Party deputy, said; 'The 2010 referendum was key for many reasons. This referendum showed the extent to which the Gülenists had become the most powerful force. The AK Party relied on the Gülenists for the referendum campaign and used the Gülenist media to disseminate its position' (Yavuz, 2018: 21).

Hakan Yavuz summarizes this period in light of the AKP and Gülen Movement alliance;

The coalition with the Gülen movement served to assist, at least initially, Erdoğan's larger aims. The Gülenists provided him manpower for bureaucracy, media outlets such as Daily Zaman and Samanyolu TV became the AK Party's outlets. The stability and the current state of the republic were now in question. When Erdoğan came to power, the Kemalist establishment, along with its supporting Doğan Media outlets, exercised various legal, political, and economic means to get rid of the AK Party, which fought back by aligning itself with the Gülen movement. The Gülenists have pushed the army back into barracks

through fabricated court cases and have placed their strongest sympathizers in various departments of bureaucracy to control the state institutions. The struggle between the Kemalists and the AK Party culminated in the 2010 constitutional referendum, which empowered the government to restructure state institutions, especially the constitutional court. Thus, the 2011 national elections represented a new era in which the Kemalist bureaucracy was subordinated and the Gülenists, not the AK Party, became the domineering force within the state system. (Yavuz, 2018: 22)

During the period 2011-2014, the harmony and coalition between the AKP and the Gulen Movement began to deteriorate on the one hand, and Gezi Park Protests, another threat to the survival of the AKP on the other hand, was an important evidence of Gülen Movements' support to the AKP's political survival. The Gülenists, with firm control of the state bureaucracy in hand, targeted the AK Party in the parliament and asked Erdoğan to allocate more than 100 elected positions in 2011 election for Gülen movement followers. But, the Gülenists in Ankara wanted more power than they represented. Erdoğan and his closest circle of advisers and aides were never comfortable with the expanding mass of unchecked Gülenist power in the bureaucracy and they worried about the consequences of Gülenist cooperation with the United States, Israel, and European powers. Yalçın Akdoğan, who was once among Erdoğan's closest associates and who scheduled secret meetings with Kurdish groups but was then later pushed aside, said the following in an interview with the author, which took place in his office in the parliament:

We made too many mistakes and the biggest one was to rely totally on Gülenist intelligence. Some of the ministers did not run their departments but allowed the Gülenist bureaucracy to run it for themselves and they just sought to accumulate wealth. Yes, unfortunately, the Gülenists were a state within the state. In other words, a 'parallel state'. It was the Gülenists who also thought about how to take and give bribes. The coalition with the Gülenists destroyed the morality of the party and I am sorry to say it now but the AK Party is neither 'ak' [pure] anymore nor is it moral. I cannot even recognize the party myself. (Yavuz, 2018:21).

The reflections of such a conflict of interest between AKP and Gülen Movement also surfaced at various times during this period. As noted above, on the eve of the June 2011 general elections, Erdoğan's refusal to include up to one hundred pro-Gülen candidates in the party list led to further tension. However, the definitive rift occurred with the so-called 'MIT (*Milli İstihbarat Teşkilatı*, Turkish National Intelligence Organisation) Crisis' on 7 February 2012 when Sadreddin Sarıkaya, a 'pro-Gülen' public prosecutor, subpoenaed Hakan Fidan, the Undersecretary of the MIT and Erdoğan's confidante, to account for conducting secret talks with the PKK in Oslo and overstepping his authority (Taş, 2017:4-5). Among rumours about Fidan's impending arrest, Erdoğan shielded him from the further legal process through an immediate legislative manoeuvre. Without naming them, Erdoğan referred to the Gülen affiliates in the judiciary and security behind this event as a 'state within a state'.

The second major disagreement involved the wiretapping of Erdoğan's office and home in 2012. In fact, numerous police officers who worked for Erdoğan, including his former chief bodyguard, were convicted of placing electronic bugs in various locations inside the prime minister's office (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 139). This wiretapping scandal destroyed Erdoğan's faith in the Gülen movement, forcing the AK Party government to curtail its effective force by going after its recruitment and financial sources. In November 2013, Erdoğan moved to cripple the movement's financial and human resources by closing the Gülen-run 'prep schools'. Gülenists were operating a quarter of those cram schools, which were not only a financial source for the movement, but also channels for recruiting new, young members (Hendrick, 2014: 131-144). Hence, this was widely perceived as a move to cripple the movement.

Despite the increasing tension, it is not possible to say that the AKP ended the coalition partnership with the Fethullah Gülen movement completely in the 3rd period of AKP. As mentioned in Chapter 3, after the 2010 Constitutional amendment, the Gülen Movement took power at the state level, especially in the Turkish judiciary. The direct fighting with such a strong structuring of Gülen Movement was also a threat to

the survival of the AKP. This tension should be passivated by the AKP due to the continuity of AKP's survival. Hakkı Taş describes this situation as follows;

While exercising great caution to avoid targeting Gülen directly, pro-government figures began suggesting that Gülen was being misled by his inner circle and whether the hardliners, especially the Gülenist clique within the security forces, were gaining the upper hand in the community (Küçük, 2012). The phrase 'Gülen is good, but his inner circle is bad' (*'Hoca iyi, çevresi kötü'*) was common in pro-government circles. Still, both sides were keeping this confrontation behind the scenes. In June 2012, Erdoğan even attended the Gülenist-organised Turkish Olympiads and invited Gülen back to Turkey, saying 'We want this yearning to end'.(Taş, 2017: 5)

In parallel with this point of view, it would not be wrong to say that the Fethullah Gülen Community is in the side of the AKP, especially in the Protest Park protests, in order to ensure the survival of the AKP. As once again stated, the Gezi Park Protest was a civil uprising example, one of the threats to political survival that De Mesquita mentioned. At this point, Gülen Movement's support in the AKP's winning coalition will play a crucial role. It was important to end this protest in terms of the Gülen Movement because the Protest was created by the secular-conservative conflict and the Kemalist sector played a dominant role during this protest. At this point, the Gülen Movement's supportive situation to AKP is important for consolidating the conservative electoral base in light of the AKP's power and survival in Turkish politics.

During the Gezi Protest, Fethullah Gülen Movement's newspaper, Zaman gave a large margin of pages expressing the damage protestors caused in the area more than any other newspapers. The terms like '*us and them*', '*çapulcu*' considered as tools of symbolic violence are equally presented in the articles of each newspaper regardless of their political opinions. Furthermore, Zaman newspapers, on the contrary to other newspapers such as Cumhuriyet and Hürriyet, had focused on the headlines indicating the negotiation effort of government to settle down the

movement, especially coming from President Abdullah Gül and Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç (Öztoprak and Subay, 2014: 93).

Another example is coming from Karakatsanis (2013). He also noted that; in a recent episode of the series called '*Ekip 1*' (Team 1) broadcast by Fethullah Gülen Movement's Saman Yolu channel TV, a reference to the Gezi Park protest was included. The difference was that all reality in it was undone to a surrealistic, almost amusing degree. Gezi Park protesters appear using 'disproportional' violence against the peaceful defending police; they attack 'innocent civilians'. Then 'leftist guerrillas' appear in the scene attacking the defenceless police with guns while conspirators with foreign accents orchestrate the scene of civil war while watching from a nearby cliff. Of course, the special forces intervene, kill the provocateurs and save the country (Karakatsanis, 2013: 8).

As can be seen, the support of Gülen Movement in the elimination of Gezi Park Protest, which is the biggest threat to the survival of the AKP, although the tension between these two actors seems to be increasing in this period. But this would probably be the last major political event that the AKP-Fethullah Gülen Movement partnership has maintained.

By the end of 2013, tensions escalated into all-out political war between the AK Party government and the Gülen movement. The Gülenists struck back against Erdoğan and his supporters by exposing corruption within the government extending all the way to the Prime Minister himself. On 17 December 2013, the Istanbul Police Department's Financial and Anti-Corruption Unit detained 47 people, including the sons of three ministers: Barış Güler (the son of the minister of interior), Kaan Çağlayan (the son of the minister of economy) and Oğuz Bayraktar (the son of the minister of environment and urban development) (Ulusoy, 2015: 69). Also detained were Mustafa Demir, the mayor of the Fatih district of Istanbul; high-ranking officials of the Housing Development Administration (TOKİ); Süleyman Aslan, the general director of the state-owned Halk Bank; and Iranian businessman Rezza Zarraf. In

addition, Egemen Bağış, the minister of EU affairs, was suspected of bribery in association with Reza Zarrab and Babak Zanjani, both wealthy Iranian businessmen (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 140). In fact, this was the most extensively investigated corruption case in Turkish history.

The period between 2011 and 2014, while explaining the survival of the AKP, specifically addressed a populist authoritarianism against the Kemalists in Turkish politics. At this point, this authoritarianism continued as a result of the conflicts with the Gülen Movement and the Kurds in the post-2014 period. Fighting its former ally deeply entrenched in the state apparatus; the AKP government resorted to unconstitutional measures and bypassed the rule of law as it set to eradicate the Gulenist cadres from the state. The power struggle between former allies further undermined civil liberties, independence of the judiciary (or whatever was left of it), and the rule of law. The government banned Twitter and YouTube prior to 2014 local elections; reshuffled thousands of police officers and prosecutors; passed new legislation to redesign the supreme judicial council; denied access to the satellite systems for pro-Gülen TV stations; seized the property of leading businessmen; and appointed trustees to companies, foundations, universities and newspapers with links to the Gülen movement following the graft probe of December 2013 (Gümüşçü, 2016: 9).

The Gülenist psyche, driven by its own political ambitions and threats, became more emboldened in the aftermath of the 2013 corruption probes and Erdoğan's daily threats against them, which may have hastened and amplified feelings and expression of radicalization. Yavuz (2018: 25-26) claims that part of the discussion should be focused on how negative emotions—fear, anxiety, suspicion, rage and panic—have constituted the psychological background regarding incidents of Gülenist violence. A sense of grave panic seems to have prevailed throughout the Gülen movement's security establishment, immediately prior to the scheduled military council meeting of August 2016, a potentially critical event at which governmental officials would decide who among the military's senior-level officers would be promoted, demoted, forced to retire or resign, or subjected to criminal investigation (Yavuz, 2018, 26). The fear of forthcoming arrests, torture and purges swept every

Gülen network by word of mouth, as the movement's followers were convinced that Erdoğan was about to destroy them.

For all these reasons, the Gülen Movement planned to overthrow the AKP government. In this context, the acting Ankara-based military team of Gülen Movement made a coup attempt on July 15, 2016. Although the coup attempt was not successful after the failure, the Gülen community claim that they did not attempt the coup d'état. However, it was clear evidence that the Gülen Movement was behind the 15 July coup attempt. Five civilians; Adil Öksüz, Harun Biniş, Kemal Batmaz, Nurettin Oruç and Hakan Çiçek have been captured at Akıncı Air Base, known as the main base of coup attempt and these civilians have organic relationships with the Fethullah Gülen Movement according to indictments (Josseran, 2017: 77-92).

Adil Öksüz, who was the leader of 15th July Coup Attempt, is a civilian-theology lecturer in Sakarya University. According to CHP's report on 15 July Coup Attempt, Oksuz has a close relationship with the high figures of Gülen Movement in academia¹⁰⁴. One of the individuals included on Öksüz's doctorate panel was Prof. Dr. Suat Yıldırım, at the time Dean of Sakarya University Faculty of Divinity. Suat Yıldırım, whose name had been touted as a potential future leader of the brotherhood after Fethullah Gülen, is today on the run. Another person on the jury, however, Prof. Dr Davut Aydın, was detained following the coup.

Despite holding a minor academic position at an unremarkable university, Öksüz clocked up air miles at a serious rate, being a regular visitor to Europe and the United States and even taking a fact-finding trip to South Africa according to the coup indictment. It also indicates that he visited the United Kingdom in December 2015 and the United States for three days in March 2016, five days in June, and three days in July, arriving back in Turkey just two days before the coup attempt began. It is unknown where in the United States he went. According to the indictment, he had financial dealings with U.S.-based companies linked to the movement and he may

¹⁰⁴http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/english/899148/CHP_s_FETO_report_exposes_continued_AK_P-FETO_relationship_after_15_July.html (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

well have been fulfilling some contract. But Butler argues that; he went to Pennsylvania to visit Fethullah Gülen himself or an intermediary – despite Gülen claiming Öksüz had been to the compound only ‘a few years ago’. ¹⁰⁵

His trips sometimes coincided with travel by some of the other four civilian Gülenists found at Akıncı Air Base that night—Kemal Batmaz, the former CEO of publishing giant Kaynak Holding which is one of the Gülen Movement’s company; Nurettin Oruç, a film producer accused in the press of being the group’s Gendarmerie imam; Harun Biniş, an out-of-work electronic engineer; and Hakan Çiçek, the owner of a chain of Gülen Movement’s schools and allegedly the Land Forces imam—although all four told the court they had never met Öksüz¹⁰⁶. Between the November 2015 elections and the military coup attempt, the indictment says, Öksüz also drove 12 times into Kazan, the district of Ankara province in which Akıncı Air Base is based.

Yavuz, who has been working on the Gülen Movement for years, explains how the Gülen Movement is carrying out this coup attempt in light of the movements’ motivation:

The coup was carried out with the support of Ankara-based Gülenist networks. In Ankara, there are several characteristics of the Gülen movement that must be clarified and understood. As the movement became a major coalition partner for the AK Party government, it also became an enemy of civil society, in effect revoking the principles of equality, diversity and a free, entrepreneurial market that also valued non-discrimination. The movement’s lack of transparency and its secretive organisational structure have persistently thwarted the scholarly efforts to make sense of the movement’s peculiar dual nature dynamics: religious but political; statist yet civil society oriented; vertical yet horizontal; local yet global. But, the movement’s duality and its forward and backward-looking faces were exposed fully during the 15 July 2016 coup (Yavuz, 2018: 26).

¹⁰⁵<https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/the-disappearing-imam-uncovering-the-mysteries-of-turkeys-coup-operation/> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹⁰⁶<https://warontherocks.com/2017/08/the-disappearing-imam-uncovering-the-mysteries-of-turkeys-coup-operation/> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

As mentioned above, it is observed that in this period of AKP, authoritarianism continues without losing its momentum. After the July 15 coup attempt, this authoritarian process was felt especially at the point of conflict with the Gülen Movement. The coup attempt on July 15, 2016, according to the AKP, was the Gulenists' final attempt to take over the government. Killing 240 people and injuring more than 2000, the coup attempt allowed the government to declare emergency law sidelining the European Convention of Human Rights and the constitution. In a series of executive decrees, President Erdogan and the cabinet suspended 88,056 civil servants, including 27,715 teachers, and expelled more than 40,000 civil servants, including 7,669 police officers, 3,390 judges and prosecutors, and 4,451 military officers for their alleged connections to the coup.

Democratic backsliding gained further momentum under the emergency law, which extended detention period up to 30 days for more than 40,000 people placed under detention. Of those detained, 20,355 have been arrested, 105 of whom are journalists awaiting trial. In the meantime, the government shut down 170 TV stations, newspapers, magazines, and news agencies, including pro-Kurdish, pro-secular and left wing media. The decrees also closed down 35 health care facilities, 934 schools, 109 dormitories, 104 foundations, 1125 associations, 15 universities and 19 trade unions. In an attempt to redesign the institutions of higher education, an executive decree issued on October 29 cancelled rector elections in public universities and expelled more than 1,200 academics from their positions. Businesses were not immune to this crackdown as the courts appointed trustees to 94 companies, with alleged ties to the Gülen movement, by the end of July; the ministry of finance placed injunction on the property of more than 100,000 individuals in the month following the coup attempt (Gümüştü, 2016: 9). As confirmed by the deputy prime minister on October 19, more than 115,000 people have been subject to post-coup investigations. Taş (2017: 8) says that; these far-reaching arrests and dismissals came at such a dizzying speed and gave the impression that the coup, which Erdoğan called a 'gift from God', was a pretext and catalyst to purge the pre-existing lists of profiled public employees and re-engineer the state's structure.

On the other hand, this authoritarian process of the AKP over the Gülen Movement, especially with the consolidation of the conservative mass of voters, creates question marks at the point of keeping the nominal selectorate large. In this context, the conflict between the AKP and the Kurds again creates problems about the support of the mass of voters. Both the Kurds and the Gülen Movement were among the AKP's winning coalition between 2007 and 2014. These two actors were out of this coalition meant that the AKP had to build a new paradigm, especially on the voters' preferences. For this reason, the AKP government under Erdogan's leadership has developed a new policy mechanism against both the Gülen Movement and the Kurds, trying to combine Islamism and nationalism with a forced marriage. Nationalist voters have been designated as the target of the AKP as a substitute for votes lost by Gülen's supporters or conservative Kurds.

This strategy has become the most important factor in the survival of the AKP in 2014. Especially in the last part of the chapter, how the 'native and national' (*yerli ve milli*) discourse under Erdogan's leadership, and how the combination of Islamism and nationalism influenced the elections between 2014 and 2018 will be examined in detail. But at this stage, the conflict between the AKP and the Kurds in the post-2014 period and how it affects the changing paradigm of the AKP will be explored.

3. The Conflict Between AKP and Kurdish Movement

Before examining the extent of the relationship between the Kurds and the AKP, the Kurdish problem will be explained on how it takes place in the history of the Republic of Turkey. The root of this issue lies not in the 2000s like the Gülen Movement, but on the contrary to the founding years of the Turkish Republic.

Under the revolutionary leader Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the new Turkish republic sought to establish a strong nation state by embracing a coercive ethnocentric nationalism. Since Kurds constituted roughly twenty-per cent Turkey's population at that time, the Turkish government viewed Kurdishness as a potentially

grave threat to Turkish nationalism (Yıldız, 2005: 7) Thus, the Atatürk government introduced a program of Turkification which was 'aimed at eradicating non-Turkish allegiances and suppressing non-Turkish culture and expression' (Yıldız, 2005: 14). This program specifically targeted ethnic Kurds and outlawed all forms of Kurdish culture and language. In response, the Kurds launched more than thirty separate revolts beginning in 1925 and ending in 1937.

From 1940 until the early 1970s, the government continually excluded the Kurds from public life and refused to recognize their existence, referring to them as 'mountain Turks' (Lundgren, 2007: 46). Although the repression of the Kurds had softened during the 1950s and 60s, extreme political unrest in the 1970's and a slow rebirth of Kurdish nationalism prompted the creation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Founded and led by Abdullah Öcalan, the PKK sought an autonomous Kurdistan and 'called for a national revolution to overthrow the Turkish state' (Marcus, 2007: 46). Although displaced by the heightened repression following the coup of 1980, the PKK flourished in northern Iraq and Syria, and in 1984 it initiated a full-scale civil war against Turkey. The Turkish military responded with devastating violence, routinely burning Kurdish villages and indiscriminately massacring militants and civilians.

From 1984 until the beginning of the peace process in 2009, the Kurdish issue underwent various stages of escalation and de-escalation; however, there was not much disruption to the dominant narratives outlined above. The post-1999 EU candidacy and accession process empowered advocates of a liberal, rights-based solution; however the limited cultural rights granted to Kurds in the EU accession process did not generate a significant degree of ontological insecurity among Turks, mostly because the reforms were undertaken within an individual rights rather than a group rights framework (Kirişçi, 2011). On the other hand, Kurds continued to experience ontological insecurity stemming from the non-recognition of their claims to difference, and the piecemeal reform process undertaken to fulfil EU criteria fell short of securing this recognition (Kirişçi, 2011).

A detailed effort was not made on the Kurdish question because the AKP tried to legitimise its identity in order to provide the first target of survival between 2002 and 2007. In the post-2007 period, there was a direct relationship between the AKP survival and the AKP-Kemalism struggle. At this point, the AKP government wanted to take the support of the Kurdish movement, which was in direct conflict with Kemalism. With this move, the support of conservative Kurds will be ensured in Turkish elections and the support of the Kurdish elite will be obtained in the fight against the Kemalist elite (Çiçek, 2016).

As a result of these reasons, the AKP launched the Kurdish opening in 2009 as an important step for openly addressing the Kurdish issue in Turkey. The 'Kurdish opening' (*Kürt açılımı*), later renamed the 'democratic opening' (*demokratik açılım*), was the first instance of openly challenging the traditional official state policy of non-recognition of the Kurdish problem and approaching the problem beyond the conventional security framework (Köse, 2017: 139-166). The reform steps involved the establishment of Kurdish studies centres at universities, the renaming of Kurdish villages with their original names, the use of languages other than Turkish in courts and the establishment of a public Kurdish-language television channel (TRT Şeş) (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2017: 4). In October 2009, 34 PKK members crossed the Habur border from Northern Iraq into Turkey in combat uniforms. The PKK indicated that it organised the crossing as a gesture for the Opening, referring to these members as 'Peace Ambassadors' (Çelik and Rumelili, 2017: 288). However, prosecutions of Kurdish political activists continued on terrorism charges, and in December 2009, the pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi* – DTP) was banned by the Constitutional Court (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2017: 4). The 'democratic opening' was suspended, and armed conflict resumed.

Although the process, which focused primarily on legal and political reforms, proved to be very short-lived, AKP's attempts for Kurdish question helped to ensure its political survival in the second term in light of the elections. At this point, the first stage would be the 2010 Constitution referendum. In this referendum presented with the aim of combating Kemalist tutelage, opposition parties CHP and MHP

campaigned for 'No'. The BDP, the representative of the Kurdish political movement that expressed some concerns about the amendments in the constitution, would have boycotted the referendum (Satana, 2012: 170). Such a boycott decision ensured that the AKP government, which held the Yes campaign in the referendum, succeeded by nearly 60%.

Another benefit of this AKP's Kurdish initiative for its political survival was in 2011 Election. In the 2007 elections, the first election in which the AKP expanded its nominal selectorate, the number of AKP MP's in the southeast region increased unexpectedly. While the pro-Kurdish party, DTP won over 20 parliamentary seats, the AKP doubled its vote from around 26 per cent to 53 per cent in the Kurdish southeast region surpassing the votes of the ethnic Kurdish DTP in 2007 Election (Satana, 2012, 175-176). Rabia Karakaya Polat (2008) argues that the granting of cultural and identity rights and freedoms, as well as economic welfare to the Kurdish population in AKP's first term (2002–07), are the causes of this success. The AKP and the DTP have competed against one another in the southeastern cities in the 2009 local elections and the DTP increased the number of municipalities under its control to 99 (Başlevent, Kirmanoğlu and Şenatalar, 2005: 547-566). According to Ekrem Güzeldere, the AKP has long ignored the DTP-ruled municipalities and after these elections. In the entire southeast region, the AKP is still the strongest party, but compared to the outstanding results there in the parliamentary elections in 2007, with 52 per cent, the new 38.34 per cent (for the AKP in 2009) total marks a significant drop (Güzeldere, 2009: 292).

One of the explanations of why the AKP has been strong in Kurdish-populated areas may be that most Kurds were indifferent to the Kurdish nationalist discourse and due to their religiosity; they have preferred to vote for conservative parties such as the FP and the AKP. This line of argument contends that only democracy and Islam can keep Turkey integrated. However, there are counter-arguments on religion's value in solving the Kurdish issue. Skeptical of the unifying nature of Islam for the Kurds in Turkey, Zeki Sarıgil (2010: 533-553) argues, "According to the AKP, the secular nature of the Republic is the main cause of the Kurdish problem in

Turkey,” while Hakan Yavuz and Nihat Ali Ozcan (2006: 105) blame the AKP for polarizing the Turkish society with the party’s ineffective discourse based on religion.

When it came to the 2011 elections, the picture was partly different from 2007 and 2009. While the electoral pressure on the rise of the MHP in this period, the AKP had to develop a nationalist discourse on the one hand and the democratic initiative on the other side to maintain the electorate support in the Southeast. Nevertheless, the involvement of the democratic opening process will lead to a relative decline in the AKP's power for the southeast region in the 2011 elections. In only 15 predominantly East and Southeastern Anatolian provinces the AKP incurred a loss compared to its vote share in 2007 (Çarkoğlu, 2011: 53).

Indeed, the AKP’s strategy of combining its rhetoric on conservative values with a more nationalist stance on the Kurdish issue also seems to have fared well for its electoral success in these elections. Not only did it increase its vote share in regions like inner Anatolia and the Black Sea, known for the strength of their Turkish nationalist constituency, but it also encountered only a modest loss of votes in east (by three per cent) and southeast (by two per cent) Anatolia. Nevertheless, the party incurred significant losses in certain highly Kurdish-populated provinces in the region (like Hakkari, Diyarbakır, Mardin and Van) which contributed to the success of the independent candidates in capturing seats from the AKP (Düzgit, 2012, 341).

However, this situation did not create a danger for the AKP’s political survival in Turkish politics. On the contrary, with the democratic opening (*demokratik açılım*), it has prevented the loss of significant Kurdish votes in the 2011 election with the AKP’s positive image on the Kurds. Çarkoğlu (2011, 55) says that; ‘although the independent candidates supported by the BDP have expanded their support, this expansion came primarily in the smaller Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian provinces where the AKP was still able to hold on to a significant electoral support’. In other words, the East and Southeastern Anatolian region, which are predominantly Kurdish, is represented by the BDP and the AKP.

3.1. From the 'Kurdish opening' to the 'resolution process'

Following the AKP victory in the June 2011 elections, it was uncertain whether the 'democratic opening' would continue. Consequently, 2012 turned to be the most violent year in the fighting between the PKK and the Turkish army since 1999. While the clashes in the following 18 months took hundreds of lives, the police and the judiciary pursued a relentless policy of pressure on Kurdish politicians. Thousands of Kurds, including BDP mayors, politicians, journalists, and trade unionists were arrested in almost two years with the charge that they were working for the KCK (Yeğen, 2015: 157-184). Nevertheless, AKP would try the second attempt of peace process with PKK due to the electoral pressure of Kurds in the future elections.

In March 2012, the signs for the start of a new policy for the solution of the Kurdish issue were given by the then President Abdullah Gül. On December 28, 2012, the Turkish government announced the most recent attempt at resolving the Turkish-PKK conflict. Prime Minister Erdoğan stated in a TV show that the talks between state officials and Öcalan were going on (Yeğen, 2015: 157-184). It was not the fact that the talks were going on, but that the prime minister had wanted to state this on TV indicated that there was something new about the process after the bloodshed of the previous 18 months. Only a few days later, Ahmet Türk and Ayla Ata Akat, the two deputies from the BDP visited Öcalan at Imralı Prison (Önürmen, Temel and Utkan, 2015: 23).

The following developments proved that both sides were determined to take the steps to open a new round. While Erdoğan announced on 12 February 2013 that he was ready to take all the political risks to achieve peace, the AKP group in parliament enacted a law enabling defence in one's mother tongue in the courts¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁷ SETA Foundation, *Timeline: Reconciliation Process*, <http://setav.org/en/reconciliation-process/timeline/17753> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

The new process was launched in early 2013 under the name 'resolution process' (*çözüm süreci*) and marked unprecedented steps regarding the Kurdish issue on many grounds. One unprecedented move was the inclusion of the imprisoned historic leader of the PKK Abdullah Öcalan in the talks and relatedly, the formation of a group by the pro-Kurdish party deputies as a channel for communication between Öcalan and the PKK administration in the Kandil mountains (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2017, 5). Following of these positive developments, Öcalan drafted a new proposal for peace and resolution and this new proposal was announced to the public on 21 March 2013 at the Newroz celebration of Diyarbakır, attended by hundreds of thousands of Kurds. Öcalan publicly announced that the era of armed struggle was over and it was now time for political struggle. He also underlined the Islamic brotherhood of Kurds and Turks not only in Turkey but in the Middle East, meaning that he was in some ambiguous way sharing the regional vision of the AKP government (Tocci, 2013: 73). Öcalan also called for a ceasefire and the withdrawal of PKK militants to Iraqi Kurdistan. The PKK accepted Öcalan's new proposal and announced a unilateral ceasefire on 23 March 2013.

It is important to note that in the third period of the AKP, reconciliation and coalition efforts with the Kurdish movement are also an important factor in trying to ensure the survival of the AKP at the same time. In the third period of the AKP, it was expressed in Chapter 4, where a populist authoritarianism could be maintained by removing the opposing forces and turning the AKP's coalition into a small winning coalition. Nevertheless, the two important actors in the AKP's winning coalition, such as the Kurds and Fethullah Gülen Movement, had not clashed with the AKP in this process and this situation would also help protect the AKP's power in this term.

This study mentioned above how the Fethullah Gülen Movement was acting in favour of the AKP during the Gezi Park Protests, one of the most important threats to the survival of the AKP. In the same way, the Kurdish movement and the PKK have made a vital contribution to AKP's political survival by not taking a position against the AKP government in the Gezi Park protests in light of the ongoing Kurdish peace process.

As outlined in Chapter 4, the populist authoritarianism process that the AKP government has pursued since 2011 has created a serious polarisation against the secular mass of the Turkish society. The biggest result of this polarisation was the Gezi Park Protest in June 2013. One of the most important events expected by the public at this point was how the Kurdish movement would approach these protests. As stated in the previous chapter, the Gezi Park protests spread all over the country in a very short time. But in the south-eastern region where the Kurds live intensively, the protesters were at a very low density compared to the other regions. The Kurdish political activist, Mehmet Kaya, explains the reasons of this phenomenon;¹⁰⁸

“Kurdish people have abstained from supporting and legitimising of this protest because there is a belief that a nationalist understanding in the West (Western part of Turkey) that violently suppresses the Kurds, fight against the Kurds and rejects the Kurds... Secondly, Kurdish politics has set up a road map with AKP government and is walking together on that road.”

It is possible to explain from the PKK's side how the solution process carried out with the Kurds at this point contributed to the survival of the AKP. The minutes of the negotiations between the leader of the PKK, Ocalan and the AKP, were published in 2016 as a book under the name Notes From İmralı (İmralı Notları). There was no detailed analysis of the Gezi Park Protests by Ocalan regarding the talks between AKP-Kurdish politicians and Öcalan in June 2013 in this book. At the same time, Ocalan's points on Gezi Park protests show that he is uncomfortable with the role of secular mass and the CHP in these protests.

On 7 June 2013 Öcalan said; ‘... This CHP is the classical coup d'état party ... Do not give any opportunity to CHP. You should not give any opportunity to secular nationalists, the CHP and the MHP.’¹⁰⁹ and he demonstrated clearly in his attitude on

¹⁰⁸ https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2013/06/130619_diyarbakir_gezi (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹⁰⁹ <https://odatv.com/mit-ve-hdpden-chpye-operasyon-2801161200.html> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

Gezi Park protests. On another occasion following the Gezi Park protest, Ocalan claimed that he had rescued the Prime Minister and the AKP government politically, and he said; 'They said; Öcalan changed his position in June 2013 (during Gezi Park Protest). I also said that I changed my position. If I did not change, the Prime Minister (Erdogan) would have gone as far as now'.¹¹⁰

As discussed above, the AKP's peace process with the Kurds has provided considerable advantages in the protection of survival, especially in the 3rd period of AKP government. However, it is observed that the 2014 local and presidential elections were followed by the breakdown of the peace process and the conflict was again settled.

Although the BDP failed to break the 7 per cent mark, the party managed to win a number of new districts in the region. Prior to the elections, the BDP controlled 8 municipalities (one metropolitan area and seven cities). On March 30, the party not only won the same districts once again but also emerged victorious in two new districts, increasing the number of its municipalities to 10. As such, the BDP currently controls three out of 30 metropolitan areas (Diyarbakır, Mardin and Van) as well as seven out of 81 provinces (Batman, Siirt, Mardin, Şırnak, Hakkâri, Bitlis and Iğdır) in addition to 86 out of 970 districts (Coşkun, 2015: 66). Simply put, the BDP managed to win local races in a fairly large region which is home to 15 per cent of the country's entire population and 72.6 per cent of the Kurds, who constitute roughly 15 per cent of the total population.

Although the BDP and Kurdish politics are likely to create a problematic situation in terms of the political survival of the AKP and the electoral support for the region, the solution process would not lose its momentum. Immediately after the local elections of 2014, the AKP amended the law of the National Intelligence Organisation (MIT) and granted the MIT the authority to meet and negotiate with "terrorist

¹¹⁰ <https://www.abcgazetesi.com/abc-forum/rezil-bir-surecin-anatomisi-9495h/haber-9495> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

organisations” and those who are imprisoned.¹¹¹ Likewise, KCK convicts began being released at around the same time and almost all were released by the end of 2014. This was followed by a more radical step: the AKP enacted a “framework law” for the resolution process in June 2014. Entitled “Law to End Terror and Strengthen Social Integration,” the framework law authorised the government and bureaucracy to determine the necessary steps to be taken and prepare the regulations needed to end terrorism and ensure social integration (Yeğen 2015, 170). Practically, the law was broad enough to specify all military, political, and legal steps needed to ensure disarmament and resolve the Kurdish question. The law also authorised officials to contact ‘terrorists’.

The most important issue in determining the agenda of Turkey in 2014 would be 2014 Presidential Election. This election would also be the first signs of a major change in the AKP government's view of the Kurdish issue. Apart from AKP candidate Recep Tayyip Erdogan and CHP-MHP candidate Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, Selahattin Demirtaş will be the third and the most prominent candidate for the Kurdish political movement. The results of the election would be concluded with great success in terms of the Kurdish movement. The Kurdish political movement, which gained about 6% of votes in the elections until 2014, would begin to become an important actor in Turkish politics because Selahattin Demirtaş, who was nominated as President of the Republic, received a vote close to 10%.

This situation became a serious threat to the AKP's political survival. The existence of a new party, which would force to pass a 10 per cent electoral threshold, would be a serious problem for the AKP. Indeed, it wants to secure majority in the Parliament because it has triumphed from the presidential election but has not been fully transitioned to a Presidential system. Erdoğan, who was elected as the President, was aware of this threat in terms of political survival and thought that he needed to change a new discourse in terms of the Kurdish issue. The developments

¹¹¹ “MİT kanunu Meclis’ten geçti”, in *Hurriyet*, 18 April 2014, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/26244381.asp>. (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

in Syria will be another indication that the AKP government will change its peaceful policies towards the Kurdish issue.

Moreover, the resolution process experienced a serious crisis only a few months later from 2014 Presidential Election. On 6-8 October, the Kurdish people poured into the streets to protest against the week-long siege of Kobani in Syria by the IS and the government's "apathy" towards or even "contentment" with the siege and the possible fall of Kobani. Almost a civil war, the Kobani events resulted in the death of more than forty civilians, most of whom were HDP supporters (Yeğen, 2015: 173-175).

Although the tension between the two actors had reached the peak due to Kobani Events, the AKP government continued the resolution process with Kurdish movement after Presidential Election. AKP mentioned the resolution process in the program of the new government, established by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who became the chairperson of the AKP and the new prime minister after Erdoğan became the president in August 2014.¹¹² The program underlined the government's determination to take the necessary steps for the resolution process. As a result of this positive initiative, Öcalan's call for disarmament and his 10-article draft for negotiations were announced to the public in a meeting attended by members of the government and the HDP on 28 February 2015 (Jongerden, 2018: 75). While the members of government carefully avoided giving the impression that they approved Öcalan's draft for the negotiations, the very form of the meeting was important as it indicated that there were two formal sides in the process and that there was a ground for negotiations.

While this process continued, on the one hand, Erdoğan, who considered Kurdish electoral pressure on the other hand, began to change his attitude in the last months of this process. Before the elections of June 2015, he began to give the first

¹¹² SETA Foundation, *Timeline: Reconciliation Process*, <http://setav.org/en/reconciliation-process/timeline/17753> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

signs of a more nationalist line frame in his rhetoric. Erdoğan, who publicly criticised the Dolmabahçe talks conducted by the Davutoglu government in February 2015, would make some critical statements to resolution process until the June elections. Erdogan mainly criticized HDP and its leader, Demirtaş, for calling for peace in the west of Turkey while promoting violence in the east (Canyaş, Canyaş and Gümrükçü, 2016: 81). This was an attempt to secure the conservative Kurdish vote to prevent HDP passing the 10 per cent electoral threshold. It was important because, if HDP failed to pass the threshold, its seats, especially in the east, would be redistributed in a way that favoured AKP, granting it enough parliamentary seats to change the constitution unilaterally without the need for a referendum.

Erdogan's efforts will not be enough for the June 7th elections, and for the first time, the AKP will lose the majority in the Assembly with HDP's surpassing the 10 per cent electoral threshold. Erdogan believes that, this situation would completely destroy the survival of the AKP in a short period of time. According to Erdoğan, AKP should completely defeat the solution process with the Kurds and draw his politics by targeting the nationalist voter base. How this AKP government combines Islamism and nationalism under this Erdogan leadership, how it uses 'native and national' policy discourse while making this combination and how this policy change feeds the conflict with Kurds and Fethullah Gülen Movement will be determined in this chapter. In this way, the cause-and-effect relationship between the AKP's Islamic-nationalist policy and its political survival will be made more clear in the next part of this chapter.

3.2. Native and National (*Yerli ve Milli*) Coalition

'On Nov. 1 [parliamentary elections] I want you to make a historical decision; I want you to make a historical effort. I hope this noble nation will vote without listening to threats. I want you to send 550 homegrown, national deputies to Parliament who

will work with their heart and soul for this country irrespective of which party they are affiliated with.¹¹³

These statements were made by Erdogan before the early general elections held on 1 November 2015. As mentioned above, after the AKP lost the majority of parliament in the 7 June 2015 elections, an early general election was again held by AKP and Erdogan because no party could establish a government after the elections. At this early general election, Erdogan was aiming to combine the AKP's continuing conservative and Islamist political stance with a nationalist policy in terms of the Kurdish issue. The most important argument used at this point was the idea of being 'native and national' as mentioned above.

This last part of the chapter will examine how this Islamist nationalism under Erdogan's leadership, and its clash with the PKK-Fethullah Gülen movement, has had a positive impact on AKP's political survival. The most important events and evidence to explore the cause-and-effect relationship between these two variables at this point will be the 2015 elections, the July 15 coup attempt, the 2017 Presidential Referendum and the 2018 elections. First of all, this research focuses on the 7 June 2015 elections, which is the first time this AKP's policy transformation has started.

4. 2015 Parliamentary Elections

The first test of the AKP in ensuring political survival during the fourth period of power would be the June 7, 2015 elections. As mentioned in De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory, political parties or leaders had to narrow the winning coalitions from one side to eliminate risks, while keeping the nominal selectorate as large as possible. The AKP has managed to stay in power by implementing this survival rule and by increasing nominal selectorate further in every election. Before the June 2015 election, the winning coalition of the AKP has narrowed again with the Kurds and

¹¹³ <https://www.dailysabah.com/columns/ilnur-cevik/2015/09/23/erdogan-wants-people-who-believe-in-the-cause-of-turkey> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

Fethullah Gülen Movement. At this point, in order for the AKP to keep the nominal electorate large, it needed a voter support that could protect the majority of the votes, especially in the parliament, despite these two actors. As a result of this, it is part of the most important factors that will determine the AKP's agenda in the 7 June elections as it would be the Kurdish issue.

A major AKP strategy in the election campaign was to keep the HDP from crossing the ten per cent electoral threshold and to obtain the seats that otherwise would have been gained by the HDP. If the HDP failed to cross the ten per cent electoral threshold, then the AKP would likely obtain enough seats to change the Constitution and deliver its promised change to a presidential system. The best option for Erdoğan would be to obtain the requisite quorum of 367 seats (two-thirds of the total number of seats in the 550-strong Parliament), which would allow the AKP to change the Constitution without going to a referendum, but if that was not possible, a secondary option would be to obtain the minimum number of 330 seats (three-fifths of the total number of seats in the 550-strong parliament) required to put the constitutional change to public vote (Bardakçı, 2018: 7). Accordingly, it was toward the HDP that the AKP levelled its most severe criticisms. To achieve this objective, the AKP put forward the argument that the HDP was unable to dissociate itself from violence, and accused the HDP of using violence to pressure the public into voting for its candidates through its association with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, PKK).¹¹⁴ The AKP also sought to take advantage of the liberal stance of the HDP on religion, which could deter some of the more conservative Kurdish voters and attacked the HDP's commitment in its election manifesto to dismantle The Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Diyanet).¹¹⁵

In response to the aggressive policy of the AKP to HDP, the HDP would also change its strategy. Thus, HDP was aimed to reduce the AKP's popularity in the

¹¹⁴ "Military: Turkish Troops Attacked by PKK, Four Wounded," Today's Zaman, April 11, 2015.

¹¹⁵ "Davutoğlu'ndan HDP'ye: Diyanetimizden ne istiyorsun? [Davutoğlu to HDP: What Is Your Problem with Our Diyanet?]," Milliyet, April 24, 2015.

Kurdish regions and to address broader communities in the Turkish society in light of the electoral base. While before 2015 it had generally focused on courting the vote of ethnic Kurds by adopting a programme addressing only the grievances of the Kurdish population, in the June 2015 election campaign it rebranded itself. By declaring itself a 'party of Turkey' (*Türkiye Partisi*), it aimed to distance itself from its monothematic legacy (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2017: 11). This marked a move from an introvert Kurdish nationalism to a more liberal and extrovert *Turkiyelilik* agenda.

The AKP's strategy would not go as planned on 7 June 2015 Election. The AKP continued to be the largest party in Turkey following the June 7, 2015 elections, although seeing a drop in support of nine per cent, from 49.8 per cent in 2011 to 40.9 per cent in 2015 (Canyaş, Canyaş and Gümrükçü, 2016: 81-84). AKP leader and Prime Minister Davutoğlu set the vote target very high at 55 per cent, and so what was achieved was way below the desired figure, much to the frustration of the AKP. This corresponded to a decrease in the number of seats won by the AKP from 327 in 2011 to 258 in 2015, with significant losses seen in all regions of the country (Grigoriadis and Dilek, 2017). Its most severe losses were in eastern and southeastern Anatolia, where support for the AKP in terms of numbers of votes cast fell from almost half of the total in 2011 to one-third in 2015. In contrast, the HDP saw its votes double between the two elections, rising from 6.6 per cent in 2011 to 13.1 per cent in 2015. Having more than doubled its seats from 35 in 2011 to 80 in 2015, the HDP won as many seats as the MHP (Bardakçı, 2016: 8-9).

In comparison to the 2011 general elections, the HDP increased its votes in all regions, with the largest swing seen in HDP votes in the eastern and southeastern Anatolian regions, where the HDP replaced the AKP as the largest party. As a result, the HDP entered the National Assembly as the fourth party, and effectively put an end to the single-party rule enjoyed by the AKP since 2002.

On the other hand, Erdogan's goal of getting votes from the MHP with this nationalist comeback on the Kurdish issue would not work on 7 June. The MHP

managed to increase its votes from 13 per cent in 2011 to 16.3 per cent in 2015, which resulted in a swing in the number of its seats in Parliament from 53 in 2011 to 80 in 2015. In comparison to the 2011 general elections, in 2015 the MHP increased its votes across Turkey as a whole, with the largest jump in MHP votes coming from the nationalist electorate in the Black Sea, Aegean and central Anatolian regions, who were dissatisfied with the AKP's solution process to the Kurdish issue (Bardakçi, 2016, 8-9).

One of the key evidence to support this argument would be post-election polls. It is the poll by IPSOS which is a globally recognised organisation which has achieved results that support this argument. In the questionnaire survey, voting preferences in 2011, especially those of the upsetting HDP and MHP voters, should be examined. According to IPSOS findings¹¹⁶, about 30% of the voters who voted for the MHP on 7 June voted for the AKP in 2011, while 22% of the voters who voted for HDP on 7 June in 2011, also voted for the AKP. These findings indicate that, while the AKP's nationalist discourse of pre-7 June did not have a significant effect on the MHP elector, on the contrary, it led the majority of the Kurdish voters who voted for the AKP to give their reaction votes to HDP in 7 June election.

In the aftermath of the June 7 elections, the political parties came together to discuss potential coalitions after no party was able to garner enough of the vote to form a single-party government. This would have been the biggest threat that the AKP has experienced since 2002 for its political survival. The main opposition party, the CHP, along with the two smaller ones, the MHP and the HDP, collectively won 292 out of 550 seats (or 53 per cent) and a coalition government formed by the three opposition parties could have had a relatively comfortable parliamentary majority with 16 surplus seats (Sayar, 2015: 265). Hence, the outcome of the June 2015 parliamentary election handed the opposition parties that have been excluded from access to governmental positions since 2002 a golden opportunity to replace the AKP in power.

¹¹⁶http://www.arastirmakutuphanesi.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Ipsos_SandikSonrasi_CNNTURK-web2.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

However, the opposition parties had not used this opportunity. The most important reason for this situation was the very different ideological positions of the three opposition parties. Sayarı (2015: 265) claims that the political opposition was divided into three parties in Turkish politics. More importantly, the ideological distance between them was large, since they each represented different cleavages in the party system. According to Sayarı, the CHP has been the traditional representative of the centre in the centre–periphery cleavage that has sharply divided the secularist and Islamist political and social forces in Turkey. The MHP has drawn much of its electoral support and ideological inspiration from its unyielding defence of Turkish nationalism along with its strong opposition to Kurdish nationalism. The third opposition party, the HDP, is the product of the Turkish–Kurdish ethnic cleavage and has sought to represent the Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey while maintaining close ties with the PKK. The fragmentation of the political opposition and the ideological distance between the CHP, the MHP and the HDP were obstacles to the formation of a coalition government (Sayarı, 2015: 266).

This failure of the opposition parties would also be an important opportunity for the AKP, which is at risk for survival. As mentioned above, Erdoğan would act to turn this situation into his own advantage. Erdoğan was determined to hold a snap election which, he believed, would reinstate his party's majority in parliament. He was apparently convinced that the outcome of the June vote did not reflect the AKP's real electoral strength and that a new round of balloting would enable the AKP to recoup its losses (Sayarı, 2015: 268). Moreover, he wanted a new election and the re-establishment of single-party majority rule under the AKP to realise his goal of transforming Turkey's parliamentary system into presidentialism. His expectation was based on an accurate reading of the public mood as well as the findings of an IPSOS's opinion poll that was conducted on 8 June, one day after the election¹¹⁷. When asked, 'If you had seen the results of the election before the voting took place, which party would you have voted for?' 22 per cent of the respondents who had

¹¹⁷ http://www.arastirmakutuphanesi.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Ipsos_SandikSonrasi_CNNTURK-web2.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

voted for the MHP and four per cent each of HDP and CHP voters stated that they would have chosen the AKP (İPSOS 2015).

The AKP and Erdogan's request for early general elections would be supported by the MHP, which strengthened these elections because the MHP did not want to take part in any coalition, especially by the opposition parties. Within a few hours after the votes were counted on 7 June, Bahçeli announced that the MHP would not participate in a coalition government and that the new government should be formed either through a partnership between the AKP and the HDP or one that included the AKP, the CHP and the HDP (Canyaş, Canyaş, and Gümrükçü, 2016: 77-89). He also declared that the MHP was ready to become the main opposition party and that he would also support holding an early election if the coalition negotiations did not produce a government. When Erdogan's calls for early general elections, it was also supported by the MHP and the possibility of forming a new government would be completely cut off and a new early general election would take place on November 2015.

In this early election, which was finalised on 1 November, Erdogan's main goal was the AKP's loss of votes in the 7 June election. At this point, there would be two options in front of the AKP; Votes from AKP to MHP or HDP on 7 June. Taking back votes from HDP would not be easy after June 2015 for the AKP. Since the AKP's resolution process with the Kurds would completely collapse during this period. The November election took place in the shadow of escalating political violence and terrorism. In this respect, there was a major difference between the elections in June and November. The balloting in June took place in an environment of growing political polarisation in Turkey. The increasing authoritarianism of the AKP's governance in general and Erdoğan's effort to change the parliamentary system into presidentialism in particular contributed to increased polarisation in party competition (Kemahlioğlu 2015: 445-464). However, this polarisation did not involve political violence.

The environment in which the elections took place five months later was radically different. Between June and November, Turkey witnessed a sharp rise in political violence and terrorism as a result of the renewal of the fighting between the PKK militants and the security forces in the southeast and two major terrorist attacks by ISIS (Çelik and Rumelili, 2017: 279-296). On 20 July, an explosion triggered off by an ISIS suicide bomber at an HDP election rally in the southeastern town of Suruç claimed 27 lives and over 100 wounded. On 10 October, only three weeks before the election, an even more massive explosion caused by two suicide bombers belonging to ISIS at another HDP election rally in Ankara killed 95 people and wounded more than 200.

These attacks and the clashes between the Turkish soldiers and the PKK in the Kurdish region would also enable the AKP's entire strategy to draw a nationalist discourse. The AKP capitalised extensively on the escalation of violence. While condemning ISIS terrorism, the government reserved its strongest criticisms for the PKK. It held the PKK responsible for the breakdown of the peace talks and reopening the cycle of violence in the southeast. The government's strong military response to the PKK was accompanied by increased pressure on the Kurdish nationalist movement, including the removal of 22 mayors elected with the HDP and the arrest of 20 others.¹¹⁸ In effect, the AKP government appeared to be seeking to delegitimise the HDP because of its close affiliation with the PKK. In its decision to start the military campaign against the PKK and to target the HDP extensively in its election campaign, the AKP sought to strengthen its nationalist credentials and win back the support that it had lost to the MHP in the June 2015 parliamentary election (Sayar, 2016: 272). Moreover, a major goal of the AKP in November was to prevent the HDP from passing the ten per cent electoral threshold and gaining representation in parliament again. As noted earlier, the HDP's entry into parliament in June had been one of the main reasons for the AKP's failure to maintain its parliamentary majority. The other major issue that received extensive publicity in the AKP's electoral campaign was the need for a stable and strong government at a time when Turkey

¹¹⁸ Economist (2015) 'Turkey's election: voting to the sound of explosions', 30 October, available online at: <http://www.economist.com/node/2167227/print> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

faced serious internal threats such as PKK or Fethullah Gülen Movement to its national security.

In such a political environment, the AKP would put a nationalist discourse besides the Islamist identity in the struggle against the Kurds or the Fethullah Gülen Movement with the policy of being 'native and national'. This policy approach has been used to ensure that the AKP restores political survival after June 7, 2015. It would be proven that the strategy was highly successful in light of the 1 November 2015 election results. The AKP won a sweeping victory in the November 1, 2015 elections, increasing its votes from 40.9 in the June 7 elections to 49.5 per cent on November 1, and its seats in Parliament from 258 to 317, repeating its success in the parliamentary elections of 2011 in terms of vote per centage (Bardakçı, 2016: 14-15). Initial accounts revealed that the AKP had won new votes from all other parties, with the bulk coming from the MHP. According to IPSOS' post-election polls for 1 November Election, another important source of AKP votes was the conservative HDP voters, the AKP electorate who had not voted in the June 7 elections, and from the Islamic-oriented Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi*) and BBP.¹¹⁹ The AKP also garnered new votes abroad, from first-time voters, and from the CHP.

Indeed, the AKP's aggressive turn to nationalism brought back the 5 per cent of vote share that it had lost to the MHP in June. Perhaps ironically, some of these returning AKP voters were religious-conservative Kurds who calculated that the AKP (which they already found congenial on other issues) was the best bet to restore stability to the conflict-ridden southeast and restart the peace process. Nevertheless, Erdogan was aware that the AKP could be able to get over the 50% vote and protect its political survival with the coalition of Islamism and nationalism. For this reason, the 'native and national' political force continued at the same momentum after the November 2015 elections. With this political stance, aggressive nationalist policies in the Kurdish region of the AKP and pressure and intimidation policies against the

¹¹⁹http://www.arastirmakutuphanesi.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/ipsos_SandikSonrasi_CNNTURK-web2.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

Gülen Movement would continue after 1 November 2015 election. However, the issue of Erdogan's strong leadership became a point of serious question for Erdogan, especially after the November 2015 election. Erdogan aimed at ensuring political survival for both party and state administration, and he was now facing a serious obstacle in front of this aim: Ahmet Davutoglu.

When Recep Tayyip Erdogan was elected Turkey's president in 2014, Davutoglu was appointed as AKP chairperson and Prime Minister. He had been the most important actor of the AKP's foreign policy during his tenure as chief foreign policy adviser to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (2003-09) and then foreign minister (2009-14). An academic-cumpolitician, Davutoğlu's writings became the foundation for a reorientation in Turkey's foreign policy. His fundamental thesis was that, were Turkey truer to its 'civilizational self' (which in his mind entailed being more open to its Islamic and Ottoman past), it would be a stronger country overall and more powerful in the international arena (Davutoğlu, 1997).

Obviously, there were serious differences between Davutoğlu's Islamist neo-Ottomanism and Erdogan's Islamic nationalism. The main issue that worried Erdogan with this problem was Davutoğlu's position to have a leadership profile for both party and Turkish politics. Galip Dalay explains the potential conflict in the AKP as follows;

The AKP was, from the time of its foundation, more than a party. It was a movement that also encompassed a political party. One of the reasons that the separation between these two was not very obvious previously was related to the fact that Erdogan was both the leader of the party and the movement. But once Erdogan was elected president of Turkey and became constitutionally obliged to sever his ties to any political party, the difference between the two came to the fore. Davutoglu became the chairman of the party and the prime minister, but Erdogan remained the uncontested leader figure for the larger conservative-Islamic social base in Turkey. There emerged two power centres: one of them was legal/constitutional represented by Davutoglu, the other one was sociological/political represented by Erdogan. Erdogan was not willing to give up

on the sociological-political leadership of the AKP's social base and political cadres." (Dalay, 2016: 4).

For these reasons, Erdogan wanted Davutoglu to leave the leadership of AKP. Erdogan preferred to use informal forces attached to him to force Davutoglu for his resignation. In May 2016, a blog entry titled the Pelican Brief (*Pelikan Dosyası*) was posted anonymously on the blog host Wordpress.com. The reference to a Hollywood movie about a conspiracy that bears the same title now framed the claim that the then Prime Minister Davutoğlu betrayed President Erdoğan (Yeşil, Sözeri and Khazraee, 2017: 22-23). According to Sozeri and his colleagues (2017); the blog post was the work of forces within AKP working directly under Erdoğan to eliminate Davutoğlu. They said that; in addition to the intra-party struggles, the blog post also revealed the existence of a network of pro-Erdogan operatives on Twitter— one that is separate from the larger cadre of AK Trolls. Based on the leaked emails of Energy Minister Berat Albayrak, researchers were able to disclose the connections between these operatives, a progovernment columnist and a partisan think-tank, Bosphorus Global. Shortly after the publication of the Pelican Brief, Davutoglu resigned Yeşil, Sözeri and Khazraee, 2017: 23).

After the Davutoglu's resignation, the AKP and President Erdogan seem to have changed tack. The former formula of 'powerful president and powerful prime minister' has been re-placed by a new one of 'powerful president and technocratic prime minister' (Dalay, 2016: 5). The new Prime Minister, Binali Yıldırım, will be a more loyal, hence politically less-threatening, and technocratic premier who will most likely leave all the important domestic and foreign policy issues to Erdogan. Besides this personal level commitment, Erdogan has also redesigned the party's most powerful internal bodies and put in place a new cabinet which will give him structural control over the party and the cabinet.

After Erdogan obtained power in the party and state, he envisioned to become the first president of Turkey in the new system. In this process, he would continue to pursue his native and national policy as a coalition of Islamist and nationalist struggle

to ensure his political survival. As mentioned above, fighting against PKK and Fethullah Gülen Movement was the most important agenda of Erdogan and AKP. In the direction of this struggle, a nationalist line and a more rapid watch of authoritarian politics were realised during this period. Kaygusuz explains the process following the November elections as follows;

After the formation of the new government, President Erdoğan – who has a constitutional duty to remain impartial – personally put a political strategy into effect to redesign AKP and the political equilibrium in the country. He established an alliance with ultra-nationalist, far right and Islamist forces, and targeted the democratic opposition which had won a considerable success against him during the June elections. The coup plot discourse of the previous period was replaced by a discourse of struggle against terrorism, and for the first time, Erdoğan's perspective of regime security began to crystallise in his attitudes and his speeches against the democratic opposition. He publicly criminalised academics, intellectuals, politicians and human rights activists who censured his confrontational policies, and portrayed them as supporters of terrorist organisations. He also called prosecutors to action and in a very short period of time hundreds of people were subjected to investigations, employee reviews or arrests (Kaygusuz, 2018: 16).

The discourses of Erdoğan and AKP also coincided with political action against opposition sections of the society, especially the Kurdish movement and the Fethullah Gülen Movement. Following of 2015 Elections, the PKK has been imposing upon the state and the security forces the model it calls 'self-governance' in Kurdish majority towns, particularly the ones on the border such as Cizre, Silopi, Şırnak, Yüksekova and Şemdinli (Gürçan, 2016:48). There was a new conflict environment in the region due to the military operations of the TSK as the reaction of these PKK's attempts. Such an environment would enable the AKP to use the nationalist politics that it needed to survive more intensively. Of course, the most important goal of the AKP in this process would be the passivation of the Kurdish political movement.

Since the collapse of the peace talks last year, Kurdish civil society and political demands were increasingly criminalized. Many of the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) mayors were deposed of their positions, Kurdish media outlets such as Dicle and Fırat News Agencies face political harassment in the form of censorship and lawsuits, and scores of journalists working for pro-Kurdish media outlets have been under arrest. In May 2016, the parliament passed a constitutional change lifting the parliamentary immunities of deputies facing legal investigations, mainly targeting the HDP parliamentarians, which later led to the arrests of 13 HDP MPs, including the popular co-chairs Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, further restricting the space for Kurdish politics (Sarfati, 2017: 7). Sarfati (2017) notes that; over 1300 academics who signed a petition earlier in the year calling for the cessation of hostilities between the state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), and condemning the state of misconduct against Kurdish civilians, have been facing ongoing investigations, probations, firings, and even detentions. Similarly, businesses, media outlets, charity organisations and universities associated with the Fethullah Gülen movement were confiscated by the state, targeted by the police, and its members prosecuted on terrorism charges. AKP government tried to control the free flow of information by passing new laws to censor and monitor online social media.

5. The Biggest Threat to AKP's Political Survival: 15 July 2016 Coup Attempt

As De Mesquita mentioned in explaining the selectorate theory, leaders or political parties face various threats to their political survival. One of the most known of these threats is the military coup attempts. In the previous chapters, we mentioned that the AKP government was subjected to such an e-military coup attempt in 2007. At that time, this study was stated that the AKP government, which wanted to break the power of the Kemalist forces in both the judiciary and the military institutions, went to cooperate with Fethullah Gülen Movement and managed to deflect this threat towards its political survival.

By July 2016, it was a different situation. The AKP government has embarked on a relentless struggle for power with the Fethullah Gülen Movement. Nevertheless, it had a point that the AKP government ignored; while the Kemalist forces were eliminated from the judiciary and the military bureaucracy on one side, while the Gülen Movement supporters set up his own cadre in these public offices on the other side. In the AKP-Gülen conflict, which broke out with corruption at the end of 2013, the AKP government first aimed at breaking the judicial power of the Gülen movement and was partially successful. But it did not carry out any worthy struggle against Gülen Movement in military institutions. Fethullah Gülen, who was uncomfortable with the increasing violence of the operations against Gülen Movement, would mobilise the supporters of movement in the military institutions to terminate the AKP government in Turkish politics.

As this chapter has already mentioned, the civil imams attached to the Gülen Community and the Gülen Movement supporters in the Turkish forces would take action against AKP in July 2016. Obviously, it is also necessary to state that there are other groups in Turkish military supported this attempt. According to a leading military analyst, the procoup forces were mostly Gülenists, but with several secular and pragmatic anti-Erdogan officers joining them, while some lower-ranking soldiers took part due solely to blackmail or other forms of pressure (Esen and Gümüüşçü, 2017: 63).

On the night of July 15, Turkey experienced one of the most memorable events in its recent history. At about 10 pm, a series of unexplainable incidents followed one another, starting with the blocking of the bridges over the Bosphorus by the troops. Television stations and news websites reporting the incident assumed that this must be a precaution against a terrorist attack—Istanbul had seen four deadly suicide bombings within the last year—but soon enough the blockade was followed by news of fighter jets flying low over Ankara and reports of gunfire near several government buildings (Altınordu, 2017: 139). The mysterious incidents were finally given a name at around 11 pm, when the Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım announced on live television that the government was facing an uprising led by a

group within the military (Jenkins, 2016). The ensuing hours saw the reading of a coup statement on public television, armed struggles for the control of key government buildings, and perhaps most traumatic for Turkish democracy, the bombing of Parliament by fighter jets controlled by the putschists. Following President Erdoğan's call on live television, tens of thousands of citizens went out into the streets and faced the tanks and soldiers (Fırat, 2016). By the end of the night, 240 of these anti-coup demonstrators would be killed and 2,191 injured. By about 6:30 am, most pro-coup soldiers had surrendered, and the coup attempt ended in decisive failure.

The coup failed because the putschists first lost the media battle and then decisively lost the momentum once people took to the streets en masse. It was the latter unforeseen development that undermined the putschists' morale, possibly leading many risk-averse officers to decide against joining them (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2017: 59). The same development also contributed to the disintegration of the procoup forces, particularly once the violence began to escalate. That the popular mobilization took the coup plotters by surprise there can be little doubt: Never before had a Turkish coup attempt (even the failed ones) met with such resistance. Civilians standing before the tanks tilted things in favor of the government and gave it an edge in the psychological battle that lasted through the night. How was the AKP able to rally the people against a military intervention in such an unprecedented way?

In responding to this question, this research finds two important facts: the Islamist-nationalist coalition and Erdogan's strong leadership, while explaining the political survival of the AKP. As mentioned above, after June 2015, conflicts between the PKK and the TSK were increasingly intensified. It will not be wrong to determine that nationalism has increased in Turkish public in light of these clashes. Under these conditions, the AKP and Erdogan, who wanted to increase the nationalist sentiments of the Turkish people to their political goals, formed a coalition between the Islamist and nationalist political approach. Indeed, the AKP identified the 15th July coup attempt as a liberation struggle and watching nationalist policy would also facilitate the mobilisation of the masses. Another important factor was that Erdogan, who was

mentioned earlier, had to take leadership in both party and state administration and achieve a strong leader profile.

Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way (2010: 67) underscore how important party and state strength are to the resilience of competitive authoritarian regimes. Strong parties and leaders, they argue, manage conflicts within their own elite ranks, mobilize support, and win elections, while strong states enhance incumbents' capacity to suppress, outmaneuver, or coopt opponents and critics. Although such regimes are not inherently coup-proof, competitive authoritarianism can be highly effective when a military intervention needs to be resisted. The AKP case on 15th July coup attempt is evidence for this argument.

The most important factor that changed the possible result of the coup and enabled the people to mobilise in this way was Erdoğan himself. At the time the coup statement was read on public television, Erdoğan had still not made a public statement and his location remained unknown. The sustained silence by this foremost representative of state authority led to speculations about his status and threatened to compromise the government's claim that it was still in charge of the state apparatus (Altınordu, 2017: 146). At around 12:25 am, Erdoğan finally spoke live on CNN Türk via a FaceTime video call, as the news anchor Hande Fırat held the screen of her iPhone to the cameras. Like the prime minister, the president emphasized that the coup attempt was the work of a minority within the military and did not follow the chain of command, challenging both the legitimacy of the putschists and their chances of success (Fırat, 2016). He recurrently underlined that the government and he himself as president had been elected by the people, and thus represented the national will: 'This is an uprising against the national will...In this country, there is no power above the national will on a human plane.'¹²⁰ Against the challenge posed by the putschists, the president reminded the public that in a democratic polity legitimate political authority is determined by elections: Turkey has

¹²⁰ <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/erdoganin-darbe-girisimi-gecesi-yayinlanamayan-konusmasi-40165560>. Accessed Date: 18 January 2017.

a government that has been elected with the nation's votes; it has a president who has been elected with the nation's votes.

The president's public statements throughout the night stressed that the judiciary would take action against the putschists and that the police had already begun making arrests. His most ingenious move from a performative perspective, however, was to call people out to the streets to face up to the soldiers. In his first television appearance of the night, Erdoğan asked citizens to crowd city squares and airports, delineating the putschists as a group outside of and opposed to the nation:

"I invite our nation to the squares of our cities, I invite them to the airports. Let us gather as a nation in squares, in airports, and let this minority group come with their tanks and cannons and do what they will do to the people there. I haven't recognized any power above the power of the people until today, and we would never recognize such a thing hereafter." (Fırat 2016: 101).

Erdogan's message and strong organisation of the party would also enable the AKP to mobilize the masses against the coup attempt. Esen and Gümüşçü summarize this situation as follows;

For a decade and a half now, the AKP machine has been brilliant at mobilizing support and winning elections. The party won five general elections, including a snap election, and three local elections to establish its electoral dominance over the opposition. As the AKP consolidated its power and built a competitive authoritarian regime, it learned to add the weight of the robust Turkish state to its own weight as a strong party in order to silence or coopt opposition. The coup attempt challenged this by pitting one part of the coercive apparatus against the government. On the night of July 15, the AKP's elaborate and extensive organisation overcame the challenge posed by this fracture between certain segments of the state and the party. Text messages and emergency meetings mobilized and organised the party faithful with lightning speed. By just after midnight, as Erdogan was going on television to rouse resistance, AKP members

and sympathizers were already gathering at provincial and district party offices. According to a survey conducted in Istanbul on July 26, among those who took to the streets prior to Erdogan's call, 57 per cent were party members and 83 per cent had voted for the AKP in November 2015. After the president's speech, the latter number rose to 90 per cent. (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2017: 64)

The AKP government which has re-established control after the July 15 coup attempt, will act as the main policy instrument of the nationalist and Islamist combination, as it did in previous periods. In this respect, the first 'native and national' policy tool, which was initiated by Erdogan in the 2015 elections, spread from politics to all areas such as economy or culture. Erdoğan had claimed the organizers of coup attempt as external powers (*dış güçler*) and those who supported these actors from inside. He argued that these powers are not 'native and national'. Thus, Erdoğan's approach would have increased his own power in the electorate base. For Erdoğan, AKP's supporters were defined as native and national, while the opposition was defined as non-native and non-national who supported the external powers. The AKP government claimed that they would struggle further to eliminate these powers after July 15th. Obviously, AKP struggled with Fethullah Gulen Movement and Kurdish movement which the non-national and non-native powers for AKP controlled in the post-2014 period.

Five days after the failed coup attempt, the government declared a state of emergency, abrogated the implementation of European Convention of Human Rights and started governing through governmental decrees.¹²¹ Since the main culprit of the coup were Gülenist officers, the main target of government's purge were civil servants associated with Fethullah Gülen within state institutions, primarily the judiciary and military. However, the crackdown did not stop there. Two days after the state of emergency was declared, the government closed with decree 15 universities, 934 schools, 109 dormitories, 104 foundations, 1125 associations, and 19 unions affiliated with the Gülen movement (Sarfati, 2017: 7-8). The largest purge occurred in

¹²¹ Turkey to Temporarily Suspend European Convention on Human Rights after Coup Attempt" Hurriyet Daily News, July 21, 2016. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-to-temporarily-suspend-european-convention-on-human-rights-aftercoup-attempt.aspx?pageID=238&nid=101910&NewsCatID=338>. (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

the area of education. In September, 2346 academicians, including some leftists with no ties to Gülen, were fired en masse from their positions with no opportunity to defend themselves and no course to appeal. Similarly, the Ministry of Education suspended 42,767 administrative staff and teachers.¹²²

The AKP ruling claimed that the main purpose of this state of emergency, declared after 15 July, was the fight against Fethullah Gülen Movement. Erdoğan described the Gülen movement as a 'cancer virus' on society, vowing to cleanse its adherents from the government and every aspect of civic life (Yavuz and Koç, 2016: 144). However, the AKP government's witch hunt against the GM soon extended to other opposition groups, such as seculars, liberals, and the Kurds in the social and political sphere.

Indeed, the first target of AKP would be the Kurdish movement. An early sign of this may have been when the pro-Kurdish Democratic People's Party (HDP) was excluded from government actions aimed at muting tensions in the domestic politics. Wasilewski (2016) indicates that; the HDP's leaders were not invited to meetings with the prime minister or president, nor to a huge political meeting in Yenikapı. Moreover, there were some subtle changes in the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AKP) and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's rhetoric. After the coup, Turkey's leaders equated the PKK with the Gülen movement, which it accuses of staging the attempted overthrow. Furthermore, they started to emphasise that 'Turkey has no Kurdish problem, just a PKK problem.' (Wasilewski, 2016). The authorities' stance toughened even more after the introduction of a state of emergency on 20 July. The leaders of HDP, Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag were arrested on dubious charges in November 2016 (Bashirov and Lancaster, 2018, 14). Furthermore, an HRW report documented that the AKP "government has jailed 13 members of the pro-Kurdish democratic opposition in parliament on terrorism charges and taken direct control of 82 municipalities in the Kurdish southeast region, suspending and incarcerating elected mayors (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The Ministry of Education further

¹²² <http://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/iste-darbe-sorusturmasinda-kamuda-aciga-alinanlarin-kurumkurum-listesi>. (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

suspended 11,285 teachers just days before the academic year started due to alleged links to the PKK. On September 28, the government shutdown 12 TV channels and 11 radio stations, mostly left-wing, pro-Kurdish and Alevi outlets, including IMC TV and the Voice of Life (*Hayatın Sesi*) (Sarfati, 2017: 8).

AKP's purge was not applied only to Kurds and Fethullah Gulen Movement. After the coup attempt, the liberal journalists of the society or the representatives of the secular opposition had taken it. The CHP has also been targeted recently. In June 2017, a CHP lawmaker, Enis Berberoğlu, was jailed for 25 years based on trumped-up spying charges (Bashirov and Lancaster, 2018: 14). Many liberal and leftist public intellectuals, such as world-renowned author Aslı Erdoğan and linguist Necmiye Alpay, who showed solidarity with the now-closed pro-Kurdish daily *Özgür Gündem*, economy professor Mehmet Altan and author Ahmet Altan, who worked for the now-closed *Taraf* newspaper, liberal columnist Şahin Alpay, who wrote for the now-closed *Zaman*, and Kadri Gürsel, a *Cumhuriyet* columnist and government critic, were all arrested in the on-going government crackdown (Sarfati, 2017: 8). These arrests were made with bogus charges of terror and involvement in the coup plans and were used as a way to discipline critical voices.

On the one hand, the AKP continued to intimidate all other sections of the society with an Islamist and nationalist policy line, on the other hand, this Islamist and nationalist policy line was also making an effort to affect the cultural and social life. The first important task done at this point was to create a memorisation on July 15th. One of the most important political instruments of the Kemalist regime's nationalism in the Republican era was the policy of the memorisation of important days, followed by the AKP's Muslim nationalism.

In the weeks following the coup attempt, government actors undertook a major campaign to permanently mark July 15 in national collective memory. Less than a week after the failed coup, Erdoğan declared July 15 a new national holiday, The

Day of Remembrance for the Martyrs¹²³. Five days later, the Bosphorus Bridge, where anti-coup demonstrators were brutally killed by the putschists, was renamed the July 15 Martyrs Bridge by a cabinet decree. Almost overnight, hundreds of traffic signboards in Istanbul were changed to register the new name of the bridge, one of the foremost symbols of the city and the daily point of transit for a large number of its residents. Around the same time, the Ankara municipality announced that Kızılay Meydanı, a central public square and transportation hub in the capital, would be renamed the July 15 Kızılay Democracy Square. Erdoğan declared that monuments dedicated to the martyrs of July 15 would be built in these two cities¹²⁴. Through these acts of memorialization, July 15 became part of official national history, comparable in significance to central reference points from the founding era of the republic (Özyürek, 2016).

In Chapter 4, it was stated that the Islamist politics started to be implemented in a populist line in the period after 2011 under AKP. One of these implementation points was youth policy in particular. After 15 July, the AKP's Muslim nationalism would follow a similar method and try to apply native and national political force in youth policies. Ekrem Düzen conveys this example as follows;

Out of nearly a hundred projects listed on the Ministry of Youth and Sports' web page, half of them could readily be classified under the nationalist-religious-moralist category. This does not mean that the remaining half are neutral or endorse liberal social-educational-cultural learning or exchange. On the contrary, the overarching theme of these projects is to encourage the native and discourage the foreign. The word "foreign" is the key term standing in as a euphemism for the "enemy," and it therefore serves to differentiate the native. The project of indoctrination gained momentum right after the failed coup attempt on 15 July 2016. The ministry immediately started a campaign named "This is Experience Speaking : The Heroes within Us," targeting the youth audience. The program brought together young people with the "heroes" who took to the streets

¹²³ <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-konusuyor-siyaset-2281848/> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹²⁴ <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/bogazici-koprusunden-sonra-kizilay-meydaninin-da-adi-degisiyor-40170582> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

to resist the coup on the night of the attempt. The program was ostensibly intended to share and transfer the experiences of “the heroes who fought for democracy.” The campaign has been realized in all eighty one of Turkey’s provinces. Central and local authorities, military officers, bar association presidents, and government-operated CSOs are among the leading supporters of the campaign. It is worth noting that universities played an active role in the campaign : in more than half of the provinces, universities either hosted the events, or the rectors of those universities participated in the events.¹²⁵

As can be seen, the Islamist-nationalist coalition that summarised together with the native and national politics spread to all areas from politics to economics, from culture to youth politics. Both this policy and the wave of nationalism that peaked after the July 15th initiative led the AKP government and Erdogan to become stronger at the same time. Erdogan, who launched the July 15 coup attempt as the "gift of God", was aware of the increase in his power after the coup attempt.

According to *the Economist’s survey*, since the coup attempt, the president’s approval rating has jumped from 47 per cent to a record 68 per cent. A mass gathering addressed by Erdoğan earlier this month attracted over a million people, as well as the leaders of two of the three biggest opposition parties. Aware of his new power, Erdoğan has sought to restructure state institutions as he prefers. His main goal is to establish a presidential system by concentrating executive power in his hands and challenging institutional checks and balances.

6. The Turkish Constitutional Referendum of April 2017

Erdogan wanted to bring the Presidential System, especially using this increased power after the July 15 coup attempt, but there was a problem he could not overcome. The party lacked the qualified majority of two-thirds of MPs required to amend the Constitution. Instead, it sought the support of 330 MPs (out of the total of

¹²⁵ <https://www.cetri.be/Turkey-s-Nationalist-Agenda-for?lang=fr> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

550) required to submit the constitutional package to a referendum. Having only 316 seats in the parliament, the AKP needed some support from the opposition to achieve this majority. The party that solved this crisis would be MHP. Following of the coup attempt, the MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli declared his support for heightened powers for the president on the condition that the first four articles of the existing constitution remained intact.

Such support from the MHP has not been so surprising since the AKP has a purely nationalist line of politics, especially after the 2015 elections. However, there were various reasons for this support in terms of MHP. Ödül Celep explains these reasons as follow;

One major loser of the November 1 election was the MHP, which lost half its seats from June 7, ending up the fourth largest party after the HDP. In the meantime, Bahçeli's long-time opponents, Meral Aksener, Sinan Oğan, Umit Özdağ, and Koray Aydın, began openly opposing his position as party leader. The MHP's demotion also played a role in the growing criticism of Bahçeli. In the period that followed, the Bahçeli-led MHP central headquarters and the united opposition block were in a constant power struggle. The failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, and the subsequent declaration of a state of emergency was yet another game changer for Bahçeli. Though his opponents called for an ordinary congress with an open, democratic contest for the party chair position, Bahçeli consistently rejected this. Opinion polls among the party delegates and the MHP base showed Meral Aksener as a strong contender with the potential to unseat Bahçeli.¹² The failed coup attempt worked to the advantage of Bahçeli in maintaining his position as party chair. The AKP government also helped Bahçeli by making the job of his opponents even more difficult (i.e., preventing the assembly of opponents by barring meetings and sending police forces)." (Celep, 2017: 71)

Following negotiations between the AKP and MHP, the national parliament, with Erdoğan's approval, declared that the entire constitutional revision package would be voted on in a referendum to take place on April 16, 2017.

The alliance with the MHP to win this referendum for the AKP's political survival was especially necessary when the 2015 elections were considered. Both the AKP and MHP leaders were confident that the majority of the Turkish people would endorse the package given their electoral support of 60 per cent in the November 2015 elections. Indeed public opinion surveys prior to the referendum indicated a close relationship between partisanship and support for a presidential system. Nevertheless, the AKP did not think the referendum would be accepted by 60% YES vote. The most important reason for this was the possibility that part of the internal party conflicts in the MHP and intra-party opponents of MHP would join the NO bloc for this reason. Bahçeli's opponents in the MHP were organising a campaign entitled, 'Turkish Nationalists Say No' (*Türk Milliyetçileri Hayır Diyor*), with a joint declaration of their justifications as to their opposition to partisan presidentialism. Prominent figures such as Meral Aksener and Sinan Oğan announced that each contender for the position of MHP chair would visit different provinces during the campaign season to speak out against the presidential transition (Celep, 2017: 72).

The AKP government would add two minor political movements in the YES bloc against the possible reduction of votes in the MHP. One would be the ultra-nationalist Islamist Great Unity Party (*Büyük Birlik Partisi- BBP*). Thus, it was envisaged that the votes expected to slip from the MHP into the NO block would be partially compensated. On the other hand, the conservative Kurds in the East were also important for the AKP government. For this reason, the Kurdish Islamist Free Cause Party (*Hür Dava Partisi, Huda-Par*), who felt his power in the region partly, would join the 'YES' bloc.

During this referendum, which was a crucial position for the AKP and Erdoğan to sustain political survival, the AKP government created a polarisation through a YES-NO with its Islamist-nationalist policy. The AKP relied heavily on negative campaigning by discrediting and delegitimising those who contested the proposed changes, evoking a deep polarity between 'the people' (yes) and 'its enemies' (no) (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2017: 308). Accordingly, PM Yıldırım, President Erdoğan and

several government ministers invoked conservative nationalist rhetoric to portray naysayers as traitors and terrorists with the aim of receiving the support of undecided voters within the conservative-nationalist constituency. Minister of Justice Bozdağ, for instance, claimed that all terrorist organisations—including FETO, DHKP-C, the PKK⁷— and legal political parties—such as the CHP and the HDP—were working together to defeat the referendum package¹²⁶. PM Yıldırım in the same vein frequently asserted that the AKP was supporting constitutional change because the PKK, FETO, and the HDP were against it.¹²⁷ President Erdoğan on a number of occasions equated naysayers with those who attempted the failed coup in July 2016 (T24 2017c) and claimed that voting ‘No’ in the referendum would be a vote in favour of the PKK, as those who contest ‘the people’s will’ and the Turkish flag indeed oppose the constitutional package.¹²⁸ Both President Erdoğan and PM Yıldırım also repeatedly accused the main opposition party CHP of acting in concert with the PKK.

It was enough for the AKP to have a yes vote of over 50% in this referendum, in which the AKP linked NO bloc with terrorism and conspired with its nationalist rhetoric for its own electoral base. The election results would confirm the AKP’s plan. The 2017 referendum campaign was hard-fought between the two camps, as evidenced by the close margin of victory for the ‘Yes’ campaign. In Turkey itself, 24.3 million voters (51.2 per cent) cast their ballot for ‘Yes’ against 23.1 million ‘No’ voters (48.8 per cent) (Esen and Gümüşçü, 2017: 315).

On the other hand, although the outcome for the AKP was positive, the alliance with the MHP could not give the expected results. The ‘YES’ bloc, composed of AKP and MHP, seems to have lost over 10 per cent of its electoral strength since the November 2015 general elections. In a constitutional referendum, not all voters can be expected to follow their party line but the gap was quite significant in this case.

¹²⁶ <https://m.t24.com.tr/amp/haber/adalet-bakani-bekirbozdog-terror-orgutleri-hayir-icin-calisiyor,387009> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹²⁷ <https://www.ntv.com.tr/turkiye/basbakan-yildirim-pkk-feto-hdp-hayir-dedigi-icin-evet-diyoruz,CgyPjoMkGEOGlqU4ajUpqg> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹²⁸ <https://t24.com.tr/haber/cumhurbaskaniboylu-bir-sisteme-evet-denmez-de-ne-denir-elbette-evet-diyoruz,388255> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

At this point, this research has benefited from post-election opinion polls that KONDA and IPSOS have done. Data from KONDA and IPSOS shows the aggregate changes in the November 2015 general elections but the party preferences of individual voters are not available. This study cannot therefore estimate from this data exactly what percentage of the 'Yes' vote came from the AKP and the MHP as well as other parties. A cursory look at the results suggests that the 'Yes' vote generally matched the AKP's vote share in the November 2015 general elections. According to opinion polls, anywhere between half and two-thirds of MHP voters reportedly defied their leaders by choosing 'No' in the referendum (KONDA, 2017). Even if this research assume that not a single MHP member voted 'Yes', which is not improbable, the 'Yes' vote was still below the AKP vote share in the November 2015 general elections in several major provinces, such as İstanbul, Antalya, Bursa, Denizli, and Eskişehir.

Although the desired vote-turnover from the MHP did not materialise, it would not be possible for this referendum to yield a "Yes" outcome if Erdogan had not made an alliance with the MHP and had not demonstrated a strong leadership after 15 July with the AKP's Islamist-nationalist policy. According to the data obtained from the researches made by IPSOS; 6% YES votes of the 51% who cast ballots voted for the MHP in the November 1st elections.¹²⁹ Likewise, 27% of the 11% MHP's vote on November 1 had voted YES in this referendum. When we compare these two figures within the total figures, it is observed that the MHP electorate corresponds to a rate of 3% in 51% of the votes. This provided the MHP with a key party when the AKP reached 50% of the vote.

Another important determinant of the outcome of the referendum was the Erdogan's strong leadership. As mentioned earlier, after the July 15 coup attempt, Erdogan increased his power and popularity in public. This was also apparent in the

¹²⁹http://www.arastirmakutuphanesi.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/AnayasaReferandum_Sand%C4%B1kSonras%C4%B1_Rapor_Ipsos_19042017-FINAL.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

results of the referendum. 72% of the voters who voted yes in the referendum voted for Erdogan in the 2014 presidential elections. The most successful politician who voted 'Yes' in the referendum would be Erdoğan with an overwhelming 85% of participants. The answer that reached the second highest place (21%) among the reasons for the YES bloc which was asked by participants who participated in surveillance by IPSOS was 'I gave Yes for President Erdogan'.¹³⁰

Although it could not reach the desired level in terms of voting percentage, the 2017 referendum was successful for Erdogan in terms of maintaining the political survival of the AKP. Moreover, the positive result of the referendum will impact also on the AKP's internal dynamics. Now that the President is allowed to hold office in a political party, the procedure had begun to give Erdoğan back his position as leader of the AKP.

After this date, the only obstacle in front of Erdogan was the next general elections and presidential elections. It is only possible after the general and Presidential elections that the constitutional amendments will be put into practice in Turkish politics. For this reason, the only target for Erdoğan was to strengthen the political survival by becoming the first President of the new system.

In the process, it was predicted that the next general and presidential elections would be in November 2019. Nonetheless, the debate about the necessity of early election for the AKP government circles after the referendum has begun. There are three main reasons for creating this situation.

The first reason was the negative situation that the Turkish economy had realized. An ongoing steep fall in the value of the Turkish lira, coupled with warnings of an overheating economy and a widening current account deficit, threaten the

¹³⁰ http://www.arastirmakutuphanesi.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/AnayasaReferandum_Sand%C4%B1kSonras%C4%B1_Rapor_Ipsos_19042017-FINAL.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

popularity of the AKP, which has often banked on a healthy and growing economy as a key element of its popular strength.¹³¹ In February 2018, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) warned Turkey about its increased vulnerabilities, such as 'large external financing needs, limited foreign exchange reserves, increased reliance on short-term capital inflows, and high corporate exposure to foreign Exchange risk' (IMF, 2018). With the Turkish economy running out of steam, keeping voters content through campaign spending could not be sustained all the way through to the original date for the elections, November 2019 (Taş, 2018: 4).

The second major reason was the local elections planned before the November 2019 elections. Hakkı Taş (2018, 4-5) argues that; the AKP's poor performance in big cities during the 2017 constitutional referendum, growing discontent about major AKP municipalities (especially in Istanbul and Ankara) and Erdoğan's ensuing purge of six key mayors to revitalise his party raised questions about the next local elections scheduled for March 2019. If the large "no" vote that prevailed there in the 2017 Constitutional referendum recurs, an AKP defeat could undermine voters' confidence in the party.

The last important reason is that the nationalist sentiment that has been rising in the Turkish public since 2015 has reached a peak with the Turkish military forces' operations in Syria. The combination of Islamism and nationalism under AKP has long been deliberately infused into popular culture through several television series on Ottoman sultans, revolving around the Turks' struggles against domestic and foreign enemies (Taş, 2018, 3-4). The 2016 abortive coup and the Turkish military's operations in Northern Syria and Iraq were fertile grounds to buttress this militant vigilantism and garner more votes. The AKP is also likely to capitalise on nationalist sentiment, which is on the rise after the Afrin operation.

While these discussions were ongoing at the AKP front, the MHP, which became AKP's partner during the referendum, was also joining the debates about

¹³¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/18/turkey-to-hold-snap-elections-on-24-june-says-erdogan> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

early elections. The rapid rise of the *İyi Party*, founded by Meral Akşener, the leader of the opposition in the MHP, was the most important concern for the MHP. A possible early election would catch this party unprepared according to MHP's politicians. As a result of this, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party, called for early elections for the 26th of August. Following his call for early elections, Bahçeli met Erdoğan a day later on 18 April. Erdoğan subsequently announced that his party agreed with Bahçeli that an early election was needed to solve the ongoing 'political and economic uncertainty'.¹³² He therefore announced that early elections would take place on 24 June 2018.

7. The Last Battle for AKP's Political Survival: 24 June 2018 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections

During the three-month election campaign, the AKP government had not abandoned the nationalist political line by using the native and national political force to preserve its political survival. This situation had occurred during Erdoğan's election manifesto announced in May 2018. In this manifesto, Erdoğan made it clear that they would pursue politics through native and national force in foreign policy, security and economic fields. He outlined the general principles of Turkey's foreign policy as independence, national interest, national security and a conscientious stance, adding that this will remain unchanged. 'We will not patronize other countries, just as we do not accept being patronized,' the president said, stressing that his party is determined to continue diplomacy at an equal level with its counterparts.¹³³ In terms of energy policies, which constitute an important leg of AK Party governments' economic agenda, the projects to decrease the dependency on external resources will continue, President Erdoğan pledged. Another vital part of the economic projects include the indigenous production of land, air and maritime defense systems. "As

¹³² <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-presidential-election-recep-tayyip-erdogan-surprise-june-vote-poll-istanbul-a8311651.html> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹³³ <https://www.dailysabah.com/elections/2018/05/07/erdogans-election-manifesto-more-democracy-freedom-and-welfare-1525640406> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

Turkey, our goal is to have 100 per cent indigenously-made land, air and sea defense systems," he said.¹³⁴

Erdogan and the AKP were also using the nationalist sentiments as culturally and historically in their agenda before the election. "Such references are consistent with Erdogan's attempts to legitimise Turkey's role as Sunni Muslim leader in the region ... as well as to pay respect to voters from other parties who identify more with their country's pre-Ottoman roots in Central Asian Turkic tribes," Lisel Hintz, a Turkey specialist at Washington DC's John Hopkins University, said.¹³⁵ "The usage of Mustafa Kemal's chosen surname of Ataturk, which Erdogan eschewed until recently in favour of Turkey's founder's religio-military title 'gazi', also is in line with recent efforts to reach out to supporters of Ataturk's party, the main opposition Republican People's Party. "Such laudatory language may sound flowery to outsiders, but can serve to stir nationalist sentiment in multiple audiences while also diverting attention away from the lack of a coherent policy package and the looming economic crisis."¹³⁶

Another focus of AKP's manifesto was the indication that Turkey would launch further cross-border operations. The most recent campaign in Afrin, northwest Syria, against the People's Protection Units (YPG) - which Turkey considers to a 'terrorist group' with ties to the PKK - was declared a success and is seen by many as having bolstered the government's nationalist credentials (Taş, 2018: 3).

This nationalist sentiment, which AKP and leader Erdogan focused on, was not only campaigned during the elections but was also turned into an electoral coalition with the MHP. The amendments to the electoral law that the government rushed through Parliament only one month prior to the elections allowed political parties to band together – a move by the AKP designed to circumvent the 10 per cent

¹³⁴ <https://www.dailysabah.com/elections/2018/05/07/erdogans-election-manifesto-more-democracy-freedom-and-welfare-1525640406> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹³⁵ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/turkey-elections-closer-erdogan-manifesto-180507191138175.html> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹³⁶ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/05/turkey-elections-closer-erdogan-manifesto-180507191138175.html> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

electoral threshold for its ally MHP and retain the parliamentary majority as a bloc. With this amendment, the possibility of the MHP to stay under the 10% threshold was prevented, while at the same time it was aimed that the possible vote losses from the AKP would go to the MHP instead of going to other parties. Thus, the prospect of Presidential candidate Erdoğan, which the MHP announced to support him, would strengthen the possibility of electing President of the Republic with this electoral coalition.

This plan would be successful in the June 2018 Elections. The winners of this election were Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AK Party). Thus, by obtaining 52.5 per cent of the vote, Erdoğan became the first President under the new system, while the AK Party received 42.6 per cent of the vote and obtained 295 seats in the parliament (Altun, 2018, 89-103). Altun claims that; under the leadership of Erdoğan, by forming the People's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) with the Nationalist Action Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP), the AK Party laid the way for a strong parliamentary coalition. As such, after the June 24 elections, the People's Alliance took its place in the legislature with a total of 344 Members of Parliament (MP) forming a substantial majority. Formed in opposition to the People's Alliance, the Nation Alliance (Millet İttifakı), composed of the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), İyi Party and Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) failed to reach its aims. Within this framework, as the participants of this alliance, the CHP received 22.6 per cent of the vote and 146 MPs while the İyi Party received 9.96 per cent of the vote and 43 MPs (Altun, 2018, 89-103).

These elections, which made Erdoğan the first President of the new system by ensuring the political survival of the AKP, also show that the AKP's Islamist-nationalist coalition is the most important factor in creating these results. Post-election opinion polls, again done by IPSOS and KONDA, will be the main evidence supporting this argument. At this point, it is useful to analyse the AKP's loss of votes of about 7%, as compared to the elections of 1 November 2015.

According to the data obtained from IPSOS¹³⁷ and KONDA¹³⁸; a mass of 9% voters who chose the AKP in the November 2015 election voted for MHP in the June 2018 election. When we apply this per centile, there is a loss of vote about 5% from the AKP to the MHP. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier in the presidential election, it is not wrong to say that the voter who voted for the MHP supports Erdoğan. According to IPSOS data, about 9% of Erdoğan's votes, which was the 52% of votes, come from MHP voters.

The increasing nationalist policy line of the AKP government since 7 June created an Erdoğan sympathy, especially in the MHP voter base in Central and Eastern Anatolia. The AKP government, aware of this sympathise, has made a significant progress in its partnership with the MHP until the 2018 elections. However, there was a possibility that these Erdoğan's supports would return to the MHP in these elections with the People's Alliance. Although the AKP loses votes during the June 24th elections, its protection of political survival was due to the realisation of this possibility. The author of this study defines this electorate base as 'Ak-Wolves' (*Ak Kurtlar*).¹³⁹ These Ak-Wolves, who voted the MHP in the Assembly-Erdoğan in the Presidency, ensured that the People's Alliance is the majority in the Assembly, and supported Erdoğan's presidency of the new system.

In de Mesquita's selectorate theory, the most important rule is to keep the nominal selectorate large while assuring political survival. When the 2018 elections were discussed, this rule was successfully implemented by the Islamist-nationalist coalition under Erdoğan's leadership.

¹³⁷ <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-07/Ipsos-SandikSonrasiArastirmasi-CnnTurk-2Temmuz2018.pdf> (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹³⁸ http://konda.com.tr/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/1807_KONDA_24HaziranSecimleriSandikAnalizi.pdf (Accessed Date: 25/09/2018)

¹³⁹ The original term of this word is Gray Wolfes (*Bozkurtlar*). It was an extreme right wing nationalist movement, the "unofficial militant arm" of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

8. Conclusion

The main topic of this study was to explore the logic of political survival in Turkish politics through the case of the AKP. As mentioned in the introduction part, the AKP has been one of the most successful examples for ensuring its political survival in Turkish politics as compared to other political parties. The main secret to this success was to keep the voter base (nominal selectorate) as large as possible, as mentioned in the selectorate theory of De Mesquita, which was used throughout this study. In the previous chapters, the AKP was able to follow three different policies in three different periods and succeed in elections, keeping the nominal selectorate large and maintaining its survival until 2014.

The analysis of the 2014 presidential election results showed that the AKP government must enter a new crossroads. The confrontation with the Fethullah Gulen Movement, which began before the 2014 elections, had no negative impact on the conservative electoral base. On the other hand, Selahattin Demirtas, who was a candidate of the Kurdish movement in the 2014 elections, received 10% of the votes, and in the next general elections, the possibility of the Kurdish movement exceeding the 10% threshold. These two actors, who had maintained their good relations during AKP's clash with the Kemalist establishment before 2014, could be a threat to the AKP's political survival for the post-2014 period. In addition, the analysis of the 2014 Presidential election results was a positive perception of Erdogan's strong leadership profile, especially in the nationalist electorate. All these factors led Erdogan, the leader of the AKP, to gather power in his hands by taking the ropes within the party, while at the same time engaging in a relentless struggle with the Fethullah Gülen Movement and the Kurdish movement. In such a picture, it would be inevitable for the AKP to shift from an Islamist line to a more nationalist line.

This chapter aims to reveal the cause-effect mechanism between the Islamist-nationalist combination and the political survival of the AKP. The intervening variables, which clarify this cause-effect mechanism, used developments such as the

2015 elections, the AKP-Gulen movement conflict, the AKP-Kurdish movement conflict, the July 15 coup attempt and the 2017 referendum. For example, the AKP government, which lost its power in June 2015, had received the positive results of the nationalist policy approach in the November 2015 elections after the conflict between AKP and PKK in the Kurdish region was increased. The partnership with the nationalist party, MHP, became the most important factor in both the 2017 referendum and the presidential elections of 2018, which was more than 50% of the vote. These data and post-election surveys are evidence that proves the causal relations between AKP's Islamist-nationalist policy mechanism and its political survival until 2018.

CONCLUSION

Most of our last 200 years is filled with turbulences, crises, strife, fights. The troubles we have had since 1950, the year we adopted multi-party political life, alone are enough for us to change our system of government. *Power or sovereignty does not accept partners*. When you make forces, which have the authority but no responsibility to the people, partners with the will of the parliament and politics, such crises are inevitable.¹⁴⁰

The introduction of the thesis begins with a quote by Niccolo Machiavelli on how leaders should act if they want to stay in power. The conclusion of this research starts with the statement by AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, made before the 2017 presidential system referendum. This statement is, in fact, a summary of the continuous power of Erdoğan and the AKP since 2002. Throughout its rule, the AKP shed its coalition partners to secure survival and maintain its dominance in Turkish politics. This understanding of power based on the AKP's survival is also argued to be the main reason for exploring the AKP governance in Turkish politics between 2002 and 2018.

The central theme of this thesis is that the cause of the AKPs political survival is explored through four independent variables. AKP in four different periods handled these variables; 2002-2007, 2007-2011, 2011-2014 and 2014-2018. The timeframe of this research is between 2002 (when AKP came to power) and 2018 (when AKP leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected president of a new system in the Turkish Republic on 24 June 2018).

First of all, a literature review (as it was at the beginning of each research) on the logic of political survival in politics was done. It is desirable to convey how the logic of political survival, which is the main theme of the study, should be understood

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.tccb.gov.tr/en/news/542/72243/the-people-will-have-the-final-say-on-april-16.html>
(Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

theoretically and how it has been developed throughout history. After this literature and theoretical perspective, an adaptation of the logic of political survival to Turkish politics was done through AKP case. The critical question is which methodology is being used to explore the logic of political survival in Turkish politics in light of the AKP governance?

Following the literature review in Chapter 1, the research methodology section seeks answers to this question. The case study analysis, which examines the causal mechanism between independent and dependent variables, is the primary method for this study. The main reason for this method is that case studies are better when the writer wants to create a high-quality theory because this type produces extra and better approach. A single case study also makes the writer to have a deeper understanding of the exploring subject. Other benefits are that single case studies richly can describe the existence of phenomenon and it is used the writer also can question old theoretical relationships and explore new ones. At the same time, the methodology part describes how to utilise the elite interviews and other documentary sources (public speeches, party documents, policy changes), while the research's explanation on the logic of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics is being proved. Chapter 1 establishes the methodological basis of the thesis and reveals the central hypothesis of this research.

With this chapter, two essential results are emerging. Firstly, the historical process was considered as a concept of political survival in the literature. Literature survey in this direction shows that many politicians such as De Mesquita's selectorate theory have developed new thoughts on political survival and have tried to apply it to country cases. Mong Cheung's book 'Political Survival and Yasukuni in Japan's Relations in China' or Anas Malik's 'Political Survival in Pakistan: Beyond Ideology' are the most obvious examples of this phenomenon. On the other hand, the concept of political survival is unpopular in the literature of Turkish political science. The contribution of this study will be at the point of filling this gap in the literature. The perception of the logic of political survival in Turkish politics will start to be rethought by this study.

After the literature review in Chapter 1, it was stated that this research was a methodological case study and the AKP case was chosen to explore the logic of political survival in Turkish politics. The methodological research conducted in Chapter 1 also gave important results. First of all, the election of the AKP case while exploring the political survival provided a comprehensive explanation of the politics of the 16-year AKP government. The AKP government has carried out different policies in each period and has undergone radical transformations in every period. However, especially in the literature, the analysis of the AKP government has usually been tried on a periodic basis. This research aims to explore the AKP's four policy lines in four different periods through a single dependent variable, its political survival. Thus, both the causal bridge between different periods was established, and the 16-year analysis of the AKP government was presented with a holistic explanation. In other words, this study aimed to find the whole picture, i.e. the elephant in the room'.

After the main skeleton of the thesis has been formed by the literature review and methodological analysis, this study offers an explanation to find the cause of the AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2002 and 2018. In this context, while creating an explanation of this research, the primary goal is to establish a causal mechanism between independent and dependent variables. The cause and effect relationship between the independent and dependent variables is not apparent, and the causal mechanism becomes a bridge between these variables. For this reason, the causal mechanism is also defined as a series of intervening variables. This thesis uses several intervening variables to clarify the cause-effect relationship between independent variables (the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism- AKP's power struggle- the rise of populist authoritarianism under AKP rule- the combination of Islamism and nationalism under Erdogan's leadership) and a dependent variable (the AKP's political survival). These different intervening variables of the causal mechanism between independent variables and AKP's survival have been explored in four different periods of the AKP's rule.

The first independent variable is the legitimisation of AKP's conservatism in the first period of the AKP. On the one hand, the AKP acted on lessons it learned from *Milli Görüş* to provide political survival, as expressed in previous chapters. On the other hand, the AKP had to maintain its conservatism to protect *Milli Görüş*'s electoral base. For this reason, the AKP will retain its conservative identity and provide legitimacy in Turkish politics under the concept of conservative democracy. The legitimisation of AKP's conservatism in the first period of the AKP was a pre-condition for ensuring its political survival. Thus, for the reformists in the *Milli Görüş* movement, political survival was closely linked to the improvement of the rights and liberties of its power base, and democratic reforms were perceived as possible with a strong external anchor. In this process of modernisation, EU conditionality came to be recognized by the AKP's politicians and intellectuals as a vital instrument to limit the role of the military and to further individual and religious rights and liberties. The EU accession process became an important tool in the struggle for power against not only the existing political parties but also the civil and military bureaucracy, especially after the 28 February 1997 military coup process.

The internal and external factors that the AKP uses to provide survival are intervening variables that clarify the legitimisation of the AKP's conservatism, which is the first independent variable in this study. Closely related to Western countries, the EU process and the lessons learned from the 28 February 1997 military coup redefined the AKP as a conservative and legitimate actor in Turkish politics after 2002. This can also be explained by De Mesquita's selectorate theory, one of the current political survival theories. The AKP has solidified its party structure with a large coalition to gain votes from all sections of society. De Mesquita's argument that a party's nominal selectorate (voters) and winning coalition should be large, especially in democratic countries, was successfully carried out by the AKP in the first period. While this success was achieved, the concept of conservative democracy was put forward in order to protect the *Milli Görüş* electoral base and to gain votes from different parts of Turkish society. The AKP reverted to conservative democracy rather than assuming Islamist policies during the first term for preventing severe challenges to its survival in the struggle for power in domestic politics.

As mentioned above, the beginning of populism and authoritarianism in the AKP period is seen after 2007. Chapter 3 explains this period with the AKP's power struggle with Kemalist elites, the second independent variable of the survival of the AKP in Turkish politics between 2007 and 2011. De Mesquita says that selectorate theory may be exposed to domestic policy threats or military coups, and civil war threats to the survival of leaders or political parties. In this case, leaders or parties are beginning to narrow their large coalitions in order to eliminate these threats and increase their power. The AKP government faced two threats to its survival. The first was the presidential election crisis that took place before the elections in 2007 and the 27 April e-memorandum coup attempt. This is the reason why the 2007 elections were not taken as a starting point for the second period. During the presidential elections, there were clashes between the AKP and the Kemalist bureaucracy/military powers who did not want the AKP candidate to be from the Islamist or nationalist tradition. Following the AKP's candidacy of Abdullah Gül for the President of the Republic, a statement was issued by the Turkish Armed Forces on 27 April, and its displeasure at the anti-secular activities of the AKP government was clearly mentioned. This first threat to the survival of the AKP government would be overcome with the lesson the AKP has taken from the 28 February period. The AKP government, which declared harsh statement against the military power's 27 April announcement, called early elections in the wake of the growing crisis as a result of the Constitutional Court's cancellation of the 2007 presidential elections.

The data obtained from interviews and other sources confirm the causal link between the AKP's struggle and survival of the AKP. Having turned the presidential election crisis into a democratic battle, in particular, the AKP has widened its electorate base with the appreciation of this struggle by the centre-right voter and increased its votes in the elections in 2007 very much. Early general elections in July 2007 where the party increased its support from 34% to over 46% and Abdullah Gül was elected as president in August 2007. Another serious threat to the survival of the AKP on similar grounds was the closure case brought by the chief prosecutor in March 2008 - the July 2008 constitutional court decision ruled against closure. Both outcomes were seen by AKP officials and supporters as landmark victories for democracy. These developments, as well as the improving economic image of

Turkey in the upcoming years, provided the AKP with the confidence to push through further reforms in civil-military relations and democratisation.

Nevertheless, this has not led to the democratisation of Turkish politics. Instead, it has turned into an attempt to reduce the AKP's large coalition and to reduce the importance of secular and Kemalist elites, who have not been involved in these threats in Turkish politics. Chapter 3 examines the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* (Sledgehammer) cases, which purged the secular actors from Turkish politics using anti-democratic procedures. At the same time, the 2010 Constitutional amendment, which was prepared to destroy the Kemalist elites in the judiciary entirely, is another intervening variable of AKP's power struggle which is the second independent variable. These intervening variables also affect the rise of populism and authoritarianism under AKP rule after 2007. Kemalist elites are the guardians of secularism in Turkish politics, and they are the barriers in front of the AKP government. The purge of these forces by the AKP was at the same time a significant obstacle to the AKP's political survival. Moreover, the AKP has consolidated the conservative voters against the Kemalist secular elites. Chapter 3 explores this change and transformation through evidence such as the developments in Turkish politics, the narrowing of the coalition of the AKP's party structure, public speeches by AKP executives, data from elite interviews and other documentary sources.

These data, which are used in Chapter 3, prove that the AKP's struggle with the Kemalists is a vital contributor in achieving its political survival. Analysis of 2011 election results is one of the important findings of this study. The struggle of the AKP government with Kemalist establishment presented to the voters as a promise of democracy and its propaganda through constitutional amendments have facilitated the consolidation of the voters. In line with surveys and interviews carried out, these promises and rhetoric were influential in the 2011 elections as a determinant of voter preferences and ensured that the AKP survived in Turkish politics. At the same time, this political situation would be the first clues that the AKP would bring more populist and authoritarian policies, especially over the secular opposition in the post-2011 period.

After the elections in 2011, which increased the AKP's vote by protecting its power, the rise of populism and authoritarianism in the AKP period accelerated much more rapidly. This process demonstrated the cause of AKP's political survival, the main argument of this research. While the period between 2011 and 2014 has been explored in Chapter 4, outstanding results have been achieved in this chapter. At the beginning of these results, the relationship between the survival of the AKP and the Turkish economy was in question. Many scholars tied the AKP's success to the success of the Turkish economy. However, the fact that the data in the Turkish economy will deteriorate with each passing year after 2011 would not adversely affect the survival of the AKP. The data obtained from surveys show that economically poor regions, on the contrary, voted more for the AKP in 2014 local and presidential elections. On the contrary, the AKP voters' primary preference was Erdogan's strong leadership and his fight against secular opposition according to surveys and interviews in this chapter.

As a result of this Chapter 4 focuses on the AKP's populism and authoritarianism, the third independent variable of the AKP's survival. After finishing the liberal and secular partnerships in the AKP's large coalition, the AKP needed a new strategy to keep its large nominal electorate. This strategy consolidated the conservative voters who hated the secular or Kemalist elites in Turkish society in light of the centre-periphery conflict. Conservative voters would continue to support the AKP in elections while ignoring economic or other problems due to this strategy. The intervening variables of this AKP's populist strategy were policy mechanisms such as anti-intellectualism, anti-Kemalism, conservative family policies, and lower-class mythology. Chapter 4 examines how these policy mechanisms contribute to the AKP's populism and authoritarianism and how it affects the causal mechanism of AKP's political survival in Turkish politics between 2011 and 2014.

After analysing the results of the 2014 Presidential Election, three important results were produced for understanding the survival of the AKP government. First, Erdogan's strong leadership profile, as mentioned above, has increased its popularity

in the eyes of the public. Second, the conflict between the AKP government and the Fethullah Gulen movement has not had a negative impact on the conservative voters. The third element is the fact that the Kurdish movement, which has received close to 10% of the votes in 2014 Presidential Election has passed the 10% threshold in the next parliamentary elections and ended the governance of AKP alone. This would be the three factors that will determine the survival of the AKP government after 2014. According to the principle of the narrow winning coalition of the political power of De Mesquita, it would conflict with the Kurdish movement and the Gülen Movement, the former partners of the coalition, which will make the Islamism-nationalism combination shifting to a more nationalist line while conducting this struggle. Erdogan and his party would try to keep power in his politics. Chapter 5 explores the cause-and-effect mechanism of the AKP's transformation and its survival, while the post-2014 conflict with the Kurdish movement, Erdogan's intra-party struggle, the clash with Fethullah Gulen and the 15th of July coup which are intervening variables of this causal mechanism. In this chapter, important results have emerged which help us to understand the survival of the AKP. Especially the surveys carried out after the 2015 elections, the 2017 Referendum, the 2018 elections, the AKP's shift to a nationalist line and its partnership with the MHP led to both maintaining its survival and making Erdoğan the first President of the new system. This proves our last argument in this study.

In the introduction, it was explained how the AKP's political survival was ensured in Turkish politics between 2002 and 2018 within four chapters. In this part of the conclusion, it was shown how the empirical evidences proved the causal mechanism between the political survival of the AKP and the independent variables.

At this point, the original contributions revealed by the study should be explored. One of the main original contributions of this study is to show that the concept of national will used continuously by the AKP is a myth. This study shows that the concept of national will is composed of a perception designed according to the AKP's political survival and its voter support.

From the beginning of the thesis, it was explained that the political survival of the AKP was based on keeping its large nominal selectorate and expanding its electoral support continuously. In this respect, the significance of national will (*milli irade*) is one of the most important tools that the AKP has used to keep its electoral support continuously in elections between 2002 and 2018. In Chapter 3, it was emphasized that there are serious threats to the survival of the AKP from the Kemalist elite. The AKP government designed the concept of national will as the most important tool for eliminating the Kemalist elite from Turkish politics. This concept of national will, based on the voter population who voted for the AKP, was also the most important supporting argument in the AKP's struggle with the Kemalist elite. For instance, on March 15th 2008, Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan called the closure of the indictment against the AKP 'a move against the national will'. From this time on, as De Mesquita mentions, the AKP has emphasized the concept of national will against threats to its survival and the aim of the large nominal selectorate would be the main policy tool for AKP in Turkish politics.

As mentioned in the independent variable of this thesis, the four different policy approaches in four different terms prove that national will is essentially designed for the survival of the AKP. For example, after 2007, the AKP's national will included supporters of liberals and Fethullah Gülen, and since the end of 2013 these actors have been regarded as enemies of national will by the AKP. Likewise, while the Kurdish peace process was under way, the nationalist voter was against national will but with its collapse after the 2015 elections, nationalist voters would align with the national will according to the AKP. The AKP, which did not introduce nationalism into the concept of national will until 2015, would completely change the paradigm after 2015. In the many speeches he made, Erdoğan introduced a '*yeni* (new) *millî*' conception of the Turkish nation as '*yerli* (native) ve *millî* (national)' which encompassed only Muslim communities. In this context Islam was positioned as the basic commonality that defined this nation as a nation. While the phrase 'National Will' (*milli irade*) gained more and more prominence in the discourse of the governing party and its leader, the notion of Turkishness has been gradually deemphasized. And the Diyanet's muftis, following Erdoğan's advice, started to use the term *milletimiz* (our nation) or *millî* (the nation) instead of 'Turkish Nation'. It is also

clear that Islamism would be married to nationalism and the term of national will would be redesigned in light of this marriage.

The change of the supportive actors and the paradigm that we have described throughout the chapters also prove that national will is a phenomenon created for the AKP's survival and is entirely a myth. This result will also be one of the important original contributions of this thesis.

As mentioned at the beginning of the study, the analysis of the AKP's 16 years of power is included in the Turkish literature periodically, but there is no severe study explaining these 16 years with the holistic approach. At this point, the most important original contribution of the research is that the causal relations between the logic of political survival during the AKP's rule in Turkish politics and the changes of the policies applied by the AKP offer a new explanation to the literature. It is an undeniable fact that in recent years there have been significant and noteworthy studies about AKP's rule in Turkish politics. For example, Simon Waldman and Emre Caliskan's *The new Turkey* is highly recommended to anyone interested in understanding the rise of the AKP under the leadership of Erdoğan and its policies throughout his three terms in government. Necati Polat's *Regime change in contemporary Turkey* complements Waldman and Caliskan's book by explicitly focusing on the AKP's second term, between 2007 and 2011. Tahir Abbas diligently analyses the complex dynamics between ethnicity, nationalism and Islam in relation to neo-liberalism and conservatism in *Contemporary Turkey in conflict*. These works are particularly concerned with the themes of economic development; the rise of Erdoğan's leadership within the AKP; the changing dynamics of civil-military relations; the challenges of managing tensions between Islam, nationalism and democratization; the 'Kurdish issue' and the peace process; and the Gezi Park awakening (Göl, 2017, p.958).

However, all these studies focused on the AKP's political changes regarding AKP's specific periods or specific political events in Turkish politics during AKP

governance. This research also explores the political changes that the AKP has experienced in different terms affect the political survival of the AKP, which is a dependent variable of this study. This analysis is also one of the most important contributions of this research.

Another significant achievement of this study is that it has proved AKP's ability to protect its political survival through its 16-year policies using important evidence in this research. At this point, elite interviews, which are one of the primary sources of data collection, play an essential role. Although Turkey is a country that is difficult to reach the politicians, the interviews with AKP's politicians who were involved at different stages and policies of AKP, has strengthened the arguments of the thesis.

In this respect, Hakan Yavuz's (2018) article; 'A Framework for Understanding the Intra-Islamist Conflict Between the AK Party and the Gülen Movement' is a current example of this method. Yavuz (2018) explores the AKP-Gülen conflict during his work with elite interviews with former and new rulers within the AKP. On the other hand, elite interviews in my research are focused not only by AKP's conflict with the Gülen movement but also by all the important events AKP has experienced for 16 years in light of the its political survival. At the same time, the AKP's policy to ensure its survival by following different policies in different terms is proved by using electoral results and surveys. In particular, cause-effect relations between the policies pursued by the AKP and De Mesquita's large nominal selectorate in his theory are supported by the post-election surveys in this research. As a result of this, this research offers an original contribution to the literature in the context of AKP's rule in Turkish politics.

Until this part of the conclusion, the new findings and explanations obtained in this research are emphasized. At this point, while examining the survival of the AKP government, there is also a holistic exploration of the 16-year analysis. Apart from these, it is also possible to put different comparative analyses, or new case study analyses in light of the political survival theories. As mentioned above, there are various studies on political survival from Pakistan to Japan. With the study of the AKP case, it will be possible to expand the work of the country and explore political

survival by political parties. The Ennahda case in Tunisia is one of the most obvious examples of this.

Tunisia's moderate Islamist Ennahda party has won the country's first democratic election since the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. Results show that Ennahda won more than 41% of the vote, securing 90 seats in the 217-member parliament (Chamki, 2014: 453-468). Ennahda, which has been in power in 2011, continued to increase Islamic politics during its rule and did not end pressures on the secular society. Ennahda's policies seriously damaged its political survival in the 2014 elections. The Tunisian secular Nidaa Tounes party emerged as the main winner in the 2014 parliament election with 38% of the vote. Ennahda was in second place with 31% of the vote (68 seats) in this election (Levefre, 2015: 307-311). As a result, Ennahda has realised that as long as Islamist politics continues, political survival will not be protected after this election. This awareness emerged at the 2016 party congress when Ennahda formally announced its intention to separate its political and religious work in this congress.

Rachid Ghannouchi, the party's 74-year-old founder and president, declared before the congress: 'Ennahda has changed from an ideological movement engaged in the struggle for identity to a protest movement against the authoritarian regime and now to a national democratic party. We must keep religion far from political struggles' (Ghannouchi, 2014). Electronic vote in this congress took the most startling decision: 93.5% of the delegates voted in favour of separating the mosque and the state; that is to distinguish religion from politics. As seen in this case, the Ennahda party decided to give up Islamist policies in order to restore voter support, which constituted their political survival. Although the example of Ennahda is moving towards a different result when compared to the AKP, political survival remains the most crucial factor for the causality of policy changes by political parties.

There are new discussions and explanations in the literature as well as important limitations of the study. One of the main limitations or possible criticisms of

this thesis is how and why the independent variables, which are described as the reasons for the AKP's survival, were chosen. As mentioned at the beginning of the thesis, there are different cause-effect mechanisms that explore the survival of the AKP. For example, several studies suggest that economic factors and economic success in the first two periods of AKP governance are a key factor in maintaining the party's political survival. However, AKP's survival cannot be explained by a single factor. In this respect, the methodology used in this study reveals the factors that contribute to AKP's survival. The analysis of data collected through interviews with political actors and election surveys supports four independent variables related to AKP's survival. For example, the voting preferences of voters were examined by analyzing post-election surveys conducted between 2007 and 2011, and the struggle with Kemalist elites rather than the economic success of the AKP emerged as the most influential factor in voting decisions. Likewise, according to the same surveys and interviews, that the AKP recently turned to nationalist politics has been much more important than other factors in maintaining the large nominal electorate.

Another limitation to this study is that radical changes in the voting preferences of voters involve contradictions. In 2011, AKP supporters listed the AKP's struggle against Kemalist elites as the most important factor influencing their voting decision; in 2018, this changed to AKP's fight against FETÖ and its support of anti-democratic practices. Of course, it is inevitable that this transformation is a contradiction in itself. But the effect of the AKP's massive propaganda campaign through mass media has not been ignored. As mentioned in Chapter 5, the AKP's dominance and consolidation of the Turkish media has made it much easier to consolidate its voters. Influenced by this propaganda, AKP voters from 2007 to 2011 supported the fight against Kemalist tutelage for improving democracy in Turkish politics, while now they believe that the AKP's fight with FETÖ and PKK is democratic. The most important tool that imposes this on the electorate is the dominance of the AKP on mass media. While it is not possible to explain this in detail within the natural boundaries of this thesis, it should be determined that this criticism opens the door to a different discussion when explaining the survival of the AKP.

One of the priority limitations is a problem created by the holistic approach used to explain the survival of the AKP. The independent variables that we use in seeking the cause of the survival of the AKP include the most basic concepts in the field of political science. In this context, basic concepts such as conservatism, populism, authoritarianism, Islamism or nationalism are discussed in this study only in the context of Turkish politics and AKP power. These concepts can be the most fundamental subjects of discipline alone, and it will be one of the most important criticisms that can be brought to this study only through the political manoeuvres in the AKP.

While participating in this criticism, the logic of political survival is considered as the fundamental dependent variable of this study. In this respect, the concept of political survival has been explored theoretically and historically in Chapter 1. The theoretical examination of other concepts did not seem possible because it contained a study in itself and the limit of the number of words in this study.

Another main limitation is that the De Mesquita's selectorate theory used in the study has created some question marks after 2011 in light of the AKP's political survival. Established with a large winning coalition (as per De Mesquita's theory), the AKP has consistently narrowed this coalition to protect its survival. At the same time, this situation led to Erdoğan to increase his power in the party (Cornell, 2014). Erdoğan's journey from 'apprentice' to 'master' must be understood in this way. As seen from this speech, Erdoğan's style of government would change during his third term.

The AKP's winning coalition has become smaller than in its first years, but it would continue with two important members of Turkish politics - the Fethullah Gülen movement and some liberal intellectuals. However, this alliance had been concluded after 2012 with the Gezi Park protests and the 17-25 December corruption scandals. Following the 17-25 December 2013 corruption scandals, Erdoğan declared 'war'

against the Gülen movement and these liberal intellectuals due to their support for the corruption claims (Saatçioğlu, 2016: 133-146). Indeed, this conflict can be explained by De Mesquita's selectorate theory because Erdoğan has continued to dissolve the partnership with the AKP's coalition members to prevent threats to his political survival. Another point of criticism of De Mesquita's theory is that in the third period of the AKP, the winning coalition did not become the leader's or party's clique. On the contrary, the AKP government has begun to seek new partnerships against the Fethullah Gülen movement and the liberals with whom the government has entered into conflict. This phenomenon challenges De Mesquita's selectorate theory.

However, the interesting point is the position of other actors - such as the Kemalist elites - in Turkish politics during these conflicts. Some of the Kemalist elites who had been eliminated by the Erdoğan government during the AKP's second term supported Erdoğan against the Gülen Movement (Taş, 2017: 7-8). One of them, Doğu Perinçek, the Workers' Party (İP) leader who was given a life sentence in 2013 as part of a trial concerning the *Ergenekon* terrorist organisation, has said he has been 'fighting a battle' against the faith-based Gülen movement since the 1970s and that Erdoğan is now supporting him and the İP in this fight (Akkoyunlu and Öktem, 2016: 515). The other important member of this conflict, İlker Başbuğ, who was sentenced to life imprisonment as part of the *Ergenekon* case, supported Erdoğan's struggle against the Gülen movement. He said, 'anyone could be successful on this struggle against Gülen movement apart from Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. If he has not been successful, Gülen will become the second Humeyni in the world'.¹⁴¹

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the relationship between Western-style business associations like *TÜSİAD* and the AKP has become much worse after 2007. Following the AKP's victory in 2007, while *MÜSİAD* (Independent Industrialists and Businessmen's Association) and *TUSKON* (Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists) that were close to the AKP government were in a rising trend, *TÜSİAD* fell into a more defensive position. As noted in before, *TÜSİAD*'s secular

¹⁴¹ <http://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2016/04/16/basbug-Erdoğandan-baskasi-paralelle-mucadele-edemezdi> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

members have been replaced by Islamic economic actors such as *MÜSİAD* and *TUSKON* who have a good relationship with the AKP government (Tür, 2011: 591-592). However, this relation has been reversed since the clash between the AKP and Fethullah Gülen movement. The chairman of *MÜSİAD*, Nail Olpak, warned the AKP government of the impact of the Gezi Park protests and the 17-25 December corruption scandals and pointed out that;

We are able to see closely those matters that affect the economy negatively since the Gezi incidents. Recently, we are following with concern the atmosphere that was created by the investigation launched on December 17 based on corruption and bribery claims, from the angle of damages it has and it will inflict on the country's economy and the environment of confidence.¹⁴²

The umbrella organisation of the capital owners known for their closeness to the Gülen movement, *TUSKON*, again, as expected, expressed in a clearer way than *MÜSİAD* the existence of corruption and bribery. On the other hand, *TÜSİAD* and pro-Western business actors such as Aydın Doğan have stayed neutral in this conflict. Although the AKP has applied pressure to Aydın Doğan with tax penalties and threats against his media institutions during its second term, Aydın Doğan's media was on Erdoğan's side during the Gezi Park protests and 17-25 December corruption scandals. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the clouds of tear gas engulfed central Istanbul and anti-government demonstrators fought with police during the Gezi Park protests, billionaire Aydın Doğan's news channel aired a documentary about penguins (Eğin, 2013: 47-48). Although the serious tension between Doğan and the AKP has continued, Doğan's media channels have not focused on the 17-25 December corruption scandals.

The situation was similar to other *TÜSİAD* actors. At the meeting of the High Advisory Council of *TÜSİAD* in 2014, Erdoğan made a speech addressing *TÜSİAD* members on many occasions, from the February 28th military coup process to the

¹⁴² <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/conflict-between-Gülen-movement-and-turkeys-ruling-akp-reflected-in-business-world.aspx?pageID=238&nid=60850> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

Gezi Park Protests and 17-25 December corruption investigations to the Gülen movement. Akbank Chairman Suzan Sabancı Dinçer responded 'fabulous' when asked how they found the conversation in the *Yeni Şafak* newspaper. Koç Groups's honorary chairman Rahmi Koç, who was targeted by Erdogan for his attitude in the trips, used the expressions 'I was very positive, I liked it'. Dogan Group Chairman Arzuhan Doğan Yalçındağ, who was intimidated by tax penalties, said he received a message from Erdogan's words 'call for action in the struggle for enrichment'.¹⁴³

It means that Western business associations and actors aim to retrieve its position and power in Turkish economics against Islamic economic institutions like TUSKON which is linked to the AKP government and the conflict between the AKP and the Gülen movement is an excellent opportunity for them to realise this aim.

As can be seen from these two examples, the AKP has re-entered the coalition with the actors that it had previously struggled against. However, according to De Mesquita's theory, leaders or parties eliminate all actors in the political arena and form their own clique. De Mesquita's theory is therefore inadequate when it explores to the cause of AKP's political survival after 2011.

This limitation can be the subject of a highly accurate critic for this study. However, this study is quite difficult to draw the future scenario for after 2018. For example, Erdoğan, who won the 2018 elections and was the first President of the new system, started to establish his own narrow cadre as De Mesquita mentioned after winning this election. Although in Turkey, De Mesquita exemplary of the case, though not like North Korea or Zimbabwe, post-2018 developments indicate potential to evolve into a dictatorship in this direction in light of De Mesquita's Selectorate Theory.

¹⁴³ <http://t24.com.tr/haber/kursude-elestirilen-sabanciya-gore-erdoganin-konusmasi-muhtesemdi,271329> (Accessed Date: 01/09/2017)

By way of concluding remarks, I want to highlight the most important contribution of my project regarding AKP's political survival. This research argues that the correlation between leaders and power repeat themselves across time and space in light of the concept of political survival. Hence, Turkey under the AKP rule is not an exception to this argument. The policies and actions that the AKP pursues to protect and sustain the political survival have led to the gradual increase of populism, authoritarianism and Islamist nationalism in Turkish politics. This research aims to explore the cause-effect relationship between these independent variables and the AKP's survival in Turkish politics by using the above-mentioned intervening variables and offering a new explanation in the literature about the AKP's political survival.

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APPENDIX A

The List of Interviewees

Abdüllatif Şener: Co-founder of AKP and Former Vice Prime Minister between 2002 and 2007. Interview by author, 26 November 2015.

Adem Geveri: HDP Van MP. The member of Kurdish Islamist Azadi Movement. Interview by author, 24 November 2015.

Ahmet Faruk Ünsal: Mazlum-Der Organization Chairman. Former AKP MP between 2002 and 2007. Interview by author, 23 November 2015.

Alev Çınar: Professor in the Department of Political Science at Bilkent University. Interview by author, 28 November 2015.

Alev Özkazanç: Professor in the Department of Political Science at Ankara University. Interview by author, 27 October 2015.

Ali Bilgiç: Lecturer in the Department of Politics, History and International Relations at Loughborough University. Interview by author, 15 December 2015.

Ayhan Bilgen: HDP Kars MP. Former HDP Spokesperson. Former Chairman of Islamic human rights group, Mazlum-Der Organization. Interview by author, 1 December 2015.

Aykan Erdemir: Former CHP MP between 2011 and 2015. Interview by author, 8 December 2015.

Bilkent University Political Thought Group: Group interview with 20 undergrad student, 25 November 2015.

Eren Erdem: CHP Istanbul MP. The member of Anti-Capitalist Muslims Movement. Interview by author, 18 November 2015.

Fethi Açıkel: Professor in the Department of Political Science at Ankara University. Interview by author, 9 November 2015.

Hüda Kaya: HDP Istanbul MP. The member of Democratic Islam Congress. Interview by author, 2 December 2015.

İhsan Dağı: Professor in the Department of International Relations at Middle East Technical University. Interview by author, 22 December 2015.

İlhan Uzgel: Professor. Former Head of the International Relations Department at Ankara University. Interview by author, 8 December 2015.

İmam Taşçier: HDP Diyarbakir MP. Interview by author, 24 November 2015.

Mehmet Bekaroğlu: CHP Istanbul MP and CHP Former Deputy Chairman Politician from Milli Görüş Movement. Former FP and SP member between 1999 and 2010. Interview by author, 11 November 2015.

Menderes Çınar: Professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations at Başkent University. Interview by author, 22 December 2015.

METU (Middle East Technical University) Political Science Student Group: Group interview with 20 undergrad student, 9 December 2015.

Mevlüt Karakaya: MHP Vice President and MHP Adana MP. Interview by author, 23 November 2015.

Mustafa Balbay: Journalist and CHP Izmir MP. One of the victim of Ergenekon Investigations. Interview by author, 1 December 2015.

Mustafa Şen: Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Middle East Technical University. Interview by author, 22 December 2015.

Nimetullah Erdoğan: HDP Diyarbakir MP. Former Diyarbakir Mufti. Interview by author, 19 November 2015.

Özgür Özdamar: Assistant Professor in the Department of International Relations at Bilkent University. Interview by author, 24 November 2015.

Ruhsar Demirel: MHP Vice President. Former MHP Eskişehir MP. Interview by author, 26 November 2015.

Simten Coşar: Professor of political thought in the Faculty of Communication at Hacettepe University. Interview by author, 8 December 2015.

Suat Kınıklioğlu: Former AKP deputy chairman between 2007 and 2011. Interview by author, 16 November 2015.

Yasin Aktay: AKP Siirt MP. Former AKP deputy chairman and spokesperson between 2016 and 2017. Interview by author, 3 December 2015.

Appendix B

The Transcripts of Interviews

Page 76;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Abdüllatif Şener: I have prepared the party programme within the AKP. I know of the party programme of the AKP, a single word still applies without change. I mean when I said I prepared it, this work was done through 4-5 separate committees. We spent 3-5 days in a hotel in Uludağ. We spent a few days working at Bilkent Hotel. In Afyon we worked again in isolation. At the same time, we had a lot of intensive work on the party. So although the group that discussed the programme changed, there were a few names that did not change, and I was the unchanging president of that team. The team discussing it changed, but I was the president of this team. And we were constantly arguing as president. So for this reason I say I wrote AKP's programme. In particular, we have been careful not to use concepts such as a right wing, left wing or liberal party. Because these concepts were now hollow ideologies in Turkish politics. We will tell ourselves who you are, what you say, how you name it. And the AKP programme is a programme that emphasizes contemporary democratic values. Obviously, it will not fight with the beliefs of the people but it has a programme that emphasizes contemporary democratic values. This is extremely important. This is a democratic programme that is not even in the programme of any party. If you cite conservative words such as Islam or Muslim, you will not find it in the party programme. For example, if someone in the party said something contrary to the party's thoughts, so that it would be prohibited to prevent it from being exported. I do not think there is any party that has that statement. This democratic party programme of the AKP has never been implemented, however.

Page 79;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Ahmet Faruk Ünsal: Of course you know the AKP was established as an alternative solution to those big frustrations arising from the February 28th military coup. The process of disintegration and dissolution of the state due to the 28 February with the state's tough intervention and the Constitutional Court's decision were a form of politics which had a negative effect on its own base, along with the many other unlawful events of February 28th. And as we saw, neither the Turkish internal dynamics nor the international system could stop this unlawfulness. Therefore, if politics was to be done, a different method had to be adopted. *Milli Görüş* had turned out to be unsuccessful, and the unlawful actions that were directed against it were due to the failure to pursue a political initiative that was followed by the international system. The AKP's founding staff was completely made up of *Milli Görüş*'s politicians, but it was decided to continue by taking other people with them, including more liberal and centre-right politicians and to soften their Islamist rhetoric.

Page 79-80;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Hüda Kaya: Before 2002, we experienced very deep concerns due to the postmodern coup of February 28; I we feel extremely censored and faced years of imprisonment and filthy prosecutions. We had been through verbal harassment by hand movements in every occasion in our society. It was extremely difficult for me to intervene in the areas where I was living, since just one sovereign identity was trying

to suppress my own ideology. But the AKP arose out of this process as a new party and as a new hope for the Muslims. I personally supported AKP with my whole heart. For 90 years, the dominant ideologies in Turkey have always been successful, but the Islamic sections, were oppressed by their opponents, and have never been in power. When we were in power, we thought that our people would not persecute us. Erdoğan had a balcony talk in which he said it was supposed to be like this, Muslims, Alevis, Sunnis, Armenians, Kurds, etc, all people, beliefs and sects wanted peace in Turkey.

Page 85-86;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Ruhsar Demirel: If you look at the establishment process of the AKP when it was founded in 2001, you actually see the intervention in politics there. Two parties were split up and down around the DSP and RP. Just before the AKP was established, the DSP and the RP were divided into two separate political parties. I think it's the evacuation of these parties' ideologies and supporters. In Turkey, the DSP is a party that is perceived as a left, a centre left party rather than a party purely of the left. RP, meanwhile, was a party with a more religious emphasis, like *Milli Görüş*, until that day. But these two parties were brought together on common ground. And there were two other parties in the Turkish Republic with the Young Party founded by Cem Uzan in the inner circle: DYP and MHP. Despite the foundation of the Young Party, it was held under the 10% threshold and thus two more parties were discarded from politics. Thus in 2002, the Turkish Republic had a two-party system. Indeed, the AKP has too many stakeholders. It is a coalition, and with its current partners, they have very different partners at the point they are today. Some of these partners have disintegrated, such as liberals or social democrats. One of the social democrat politicians, Ertuğrul Günay, withdrew his support for the AKP after 2011. Now, the AKP may be more related to *Milli Görüş*, but it is not the only dynamic within the AKP.

And I think that AKP's opportunism is exactly the politics that has responded to it. 'AKP does not represent Islam or nationalism; it is a simple case or example of opportunism in Turkish politics due to its coalitional structure'.

Page 86;

Author: AKP supported from outside EU and USA in 2002. What is the reason of this? Was the AKP presented as a democratic Muslim power model against the September 11 attacks?

Nimetullah Erdoğan: The ideological developments in the Western world under the leadership of the United States are well read. For example, from an Iranian revolution the world knows very much from the US, and there are great wars, the Iranian Revolutionary leader, Khomeini, said the great devil, and for many years the struggles with the US fought. The first clashes began with the invasion of the US Embassy of a youth movement in which students in Iran, headed by Ahmadinejad. Then there are the Iran-Iraq wars and the Iranian reality where we are gradually raising the enemies. The West will be really frightened by the fact that Iran has seen such legal political movements more moderate and warmer. By reading like this, even if the doors were not fully opened in the West, it was more positively approaching towards the AKP. This situation was read it well by AKP. Instead of turning the direction to the east, AKP began to develop the relations with EU and West.

Page 86;

Author: What can be done in terms of foreign policy in the process of AKP establishment? How will the quest for a role model in the Middle East after September 11 be evaluated for the AKP?

Özgür Özdamar: An alliance of civilisations after the 9/11 attacks helped to raise the AKP's power and popularity in international relations. I believe that Turkey changed

its foreign policy agenda from the notion of building an intercontinental bridge to an alliance of civilisations under Erdoğan's government.

Page 87;

Author: What can be done in terms of foreign policy in the process of AKP establishment? How will the quest for a role model in the Middle East after September 11 be evaluated for the AKP?

Menderes Çınar: Instead of the Anti-Western National View, such a moderate Islamic project was compatible with the AKP. Harmonious Islamist politics was a blessing, very strategic, especially for the West. And the AKP was aware of it and benefited from it. He had a legitimacy gap, and that obligation was closed in this way. I did not mean to pretend to be acting, but it was such a good alliance between AKP and West.

Page 90;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of Milli Görüş, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Simten Coşar: ... With the 2001 economic crisis, the central right-wing political parties in that area lost their legitimacy and needed a political act to fill it. What the AKP did was mainly to manipulate it.

Page 90;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different

opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Yasin Aktay: I believe conservative democracy' is the only possible concept with which to understand the survival of the AKP in Turkish political history since it is illegal to form a party on the basis of religious ideas.

Page 90;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Mehmet Bekaroğlu: I define the AKP as a political party, a pragmatist political movement aimed at power. The closure of the Welfare and Virtue Party was important in the establishment of the AKP. There was an institution of ideological guardianship against the *Milli Görüş*. Second, there is established capital, representing something else against Erbakan. These were known from Erbakan's statements. Erbakan was blocked by these actors. At that time, those who held the pulse of the community predicted the future of such a political wave. There was a great shift in sociology. Anatolia walked to the center of Istanbul and demanded power. Barriers were not possible; the AKP just took power here with the concept of conservative democracy.

Page 97;

Author: I start with the same question for the participants. Going back to 2002, how did you define this foundation period in the establishment of the AKP? Different opinions exist, some see it as a continuation of *Milli Görüş*, others as a new centre under the concept of conservative democracy; how do you evaluate it?

Mustafa Balbay: I think that the AKP has changed political Islam by emancipating Islam for the sake of it, filling it with other things and ranting it with power in party interests. This is not the change, but rather the metamorphosis. If the AKP had tried to become more authoritarian and more Islamic in 2003 or 2004, there would have been a huge reaction from the Turkish public and international actors against Erdoğan's government. I'd like to give an example. If you tossed a frog into already-boiling water, it would leap out. But a frog placed into a pan of water with a low flame under it will slowly be boiled alive, the temperature change being too subtle for the frog to notice. The AKP has used the same method in order to raise its power and there is no resistance against the AKP.

Page 103-104;

Author: You mentioned the Republic rallies. Since 2002, the Kemalists has claimed there is a secret agenda, since 2002, it says that the Islamist state was realized by AKP government with its hidden agenda in Turkish politics. Is it possible?

Suat Kınıklıoğlu: So the Kemalists in the TR were right in our perception. There is some truth to it, actually. In other words, the reality that people do not want to see is the difference between the AKP of that time and the present. The EU accession process was one of the most important agendas of the AKP's foreign policy in their first term. EU institutions instilled a discipline in the AKP. However, following Sarkozy's election as French president in 2006, Turkey's EU accession process was slowed down due to Merkel's and Sarkozy's opposition to it. After these developments, Cyprus' EU accession undermined the AKP's discipline in terms of the democratisation process. I believe that, the AKP is one of the more useful examples for the international actors in light of 9/11 and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Middle East. Moreover, Kemalist protestors do not want to have a good relationship with the United States or European Union and the AKP tried to prevent the threat of Turkey's marginalisation in international affairs during this clash.

Page 104;

Author: You also mentioned the military powers' guardianship in Turkish politics. One of the important centers of the secular and Islamic clashes in the TR is the breaking of the guardianship of the army. Nowadays some people say that breaking this tutelage is the first step of the AKP to establish its own Islamist dictatorship. What do you think about that?

Alev Özkazanç: I believe that illegal organisations like *Ergenekon* planned to engage in assassinations and cause chaos in society in order to overthrow the government. Some parts of society - like the military bureaucracy and the Kemalists - saw the AKP as 'illegitimate' since 2002.

Page 104;

Author: After 2007 with the Ergenekon investigations Kemalists said the hidden agenda of the AKP to establish an Islamist state with the eliminating of Kemalists in Turkish politics. How did you see this process?

Alev Çınar: I certainly do not agree with these views. I think it is desirable to reduce the role of military powers in Turkish politics as much as possible. One of the best policies for the AKP's government is the fight against military elites in order to reduce its power in Turkish politics.

Page 113;

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this tutelage is the first step of the AKP to establish its own Islamist dictatorship. What do you think about that?

Ayhan Bilgen: The decrease of military powers in Turkish politics should be the most important goal for political parties in Turkey and the AKP was successful in achieving this. However, this achievement has existed entirely to bring about the AKP's own Islamist and authoritarian governance. If the AKP were sincere about democratisation and civilisation, it would continue to change the other anti-democratic bureaucratic institutions like the Higher Education Council (YÖK) or the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*).

Page 114;

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Adem Geveri: The AKP was struggling to control the military powers from one side, to give it a new identity and to take advantage of it from the other side. The TR army is not an ordinary army, but Kemalist ideology that has entered the military powers' guardianship of secularism in Turkish politics. However, the AKP's real goal is not to reduce the military/Kemalist bureaucracy's power in Turkish political life - Erdoğan and his colleagues simply tried to control the military forces in order to gain their support. The support of the EU and the United States on this issue helped the AKP to dominate the armed forces. I think, 'this is not success for democracy, only for the AKP.

Page 114;

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İhsan Dağı: The AKP knew that improving TR's democracy in order to be able to exist, legitimize its conservatism and make it permanent would require more reforms to advance the EU process. Even if it was the secret agenda of the AKP, the AKP could not praise this agenda in a TR where there is closely integrated with the EU, and the world in light of the democratic mechanisms. The AKP develops a step-by-step strategy for survival in Turkish politics.

Page 117;

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Mevlüt Karakaya: Everything is very clear when we compile and rearrange the interviews of the AKP executives as follows. The AKP used this struggle as a tool of victimisation rather than democratisation. Erdoğan and the AKP's policy in these cases is pragmatist and uses religious discourse to appeal to conservative voters in the elections. I believe that the AKP always benefited from this discourse before the 2007 and 2011 general elections in Turkey and one of the best-known examples of this is the 2007 Presidential election. He argues that *Ergenekon*, *Balyoz* and other cases became the AKP's tools with which to manipulate and consolidate voters.

Page 118;

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Mustafa Balbay: When Erdoğan wanted to engage in authoritarianism after 2007, he used these clashes to gain the support of external institutions such as the European Union and the United States. We started to write about the AKP's authoritarianism and Islamism in 2007 and received a prize while in *Silivri* (a prison where the *Ergenekon* trials took place).

Page 118;

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İlhan Uzgöl: In terms of the democratisation process, the Kurdish peace process, and the EU accession process, all of these dynamics were started after 1999. As a result, these developments did not start with the AKP government, who just continued these already-existing processes. However, some leftist liberals and other groups see the AKP as a 'redeemer' and Erdoğan as a 'deliverer'. I wrote an article on *Radikal* about this issue and I said that most of the liberal scholars gave unlimited credit to the AKP government in the struggle against Kemalist military domination and they could not have been aware of the rise of AKP's Islamism and authoritarianism in Turkish politics.

Page 119;

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Fethi Açıkel: There was a wide range of debate, whether AKP had an hidden agenda or not. Political and intellectualist movements that are categorically opposed to the AKP have always been in the Turkish politics. A significant part of these also had serious reasons. As a result, I do not agree with the AKP's identification as a 'redeemer' from Kemalism during their clash with military/secular powers. Secularist or Kemalist elites were proved right about the AKP's transition from democracy to authoritarianism within the rise of Islamism in Turkish politics.

Page 119;

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Mustafa Şen: Indeed, The AKP was established within a huge coalition in Turkish domestic politics. About half of Turkish citizens voted for them in the election and there was international support for the AKP and Erdoğan's government from institutions like the European Union. It was not possible for the military forces to find support against the AKP, which they were supported by internal and external actors in the 28 February military coup. As seen in the new developments in the *Ergenekon* and *Balyoz* cases, these trials are based on illegal evidence and it demonstrates why the AKP has not been fair in its struggle against military domination.

Page 139;

Author: There are comments about the rise of Islamism in Turkey after 2011. Some have said that the AKP has begun to return to the *Milli Görüş*'s perspective. How do you interpret this trend especially between 2011 and 2014?

Suat Kınıklıoğlu: After the victory in the 2010 referendum with 60% of vote, Erdoğan thought the Kemalists sustained the defeat against the AKP. He didn't need legitimization of AKP's conservatism in Turkish politics or he did not need the support of liberals or seculars after 2011. As a result, Erdoğan and AKP changed his policy towards being more Islamist.

Page 139-140;

Author: There are comments about the rise of Islamism in Turkey after 2011. Some have said that the AKP has begun to return to the *Milli Görüş*'s Islamist perspective. How do you interpret this trend especially between 2011 and 2014 in light of the rise of Islamism in Turkish politics?

Abdüllatif Şener: I think this process is entirely due to the rise of Erdoğan's pragmatism. Erdoğan had entered into a pragmatic alliance with some of the liberals who defined themselves as secular. 'Erdoğan is a highly pragmatic and Machiavellian politician. He does everything for his self-interest in politics. He used the liberals in his first term and he commanded or praised them for this reason. When he felt short of support, he started to criticise liberals or intellectuals'

Page 147;

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Aykan Erdemir: I argue that both Erdoğan and AKP are more conservative after 2011. However, this is completely strategic for me. AKP would use this perception of the Kemalist enemy when seeking support from the masses. Erdoğan and his group of AKP staff increased his speeches against Kemalism and the CHP mentality in order to control and consolidate their power in the whole country.

Page 151;

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Ruhsar Demirel: We can see this especially in AKP's women policies. When Erdogan considered abortion to be a murder in the UNDP meeting, I was at the same conference. 'I have never seen such a banal and vulgar speech before. Abortion is not a birth control method, but it is necessary in order to reduce maternal mortality. I have been working in the Health of Ministry for 17 years on this matter and I am very unhappy to blow up our efforts on this issue'. Erdoğan and his government damaged the gains of women's rights made during the Turkish Republic and that he has done it using Islamist values.

Page 161-162;

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Student A and B (From Bilkent University): We do not accept the rise of Islamism and the idea of 'Erdoğan's leadership in the Muslim world'. If the rise of Islamism has been realised by AKP, the Turkish state would ban alcohol or punish adultery. If

Erdoğan were faithful to his religion, he would not try to create good relations with Israel or the United States, according to them.

Student C (From Bilkent University): I'd like to give an Erdogan's speeches on Egypt. In 2011 Erdoğan called on Egyptians to adopt a secular constitution, noting that secularism does not mean renouncing religion. On the one hand, Erdoğan has made many speeches against secularism in the past and present, but on the other hand he has made many others about the importance of secularism. He points out that Erdoğan's discourse has many dilemmas and contradictions within it due to his political interest in both domestic and foreign politics.

Student D (From Bilkent University): If you do not prostrate yourself in prayer (*secde*), you cannot work in public office. For example, my memory of the Canadian ambassador, who said to me: "the Turkish ambassadors in foreign countries do not go to meetings which includes alcohol due to the AKP's pressure"

Student E (From Bilkent University): there has been no quantitative increase of conservative/religious people in Turkish society, but instead that the conservative people in Turkey have become more Islamic and more authoritarian due to Erdoğan's Islamist and authoritarian profile.

Page 163;

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Mehmet Bekaroğlu: I do not agree that; this is a real Islamism. 'If there is a 13-year Islamist government in Turkey, how can we explain non-Islamic civilisation and urbanisation in the big cities? The AKP has built huge blocks and big malls in the cities rather than functional buildings'. Erdoğan increasingly uses Islamism as a tool for his personal political interests, paying lip service to religious ideals only when it suits him.

Page 163;

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Abdüllatif Şener: I prepared for the AKP party programme to make my dreams come true in Turkish politics, as I'd like to show the compatibility between Islam and democracy in Turkey from their viewpoint. However, Erdoğan has not been successful on this goal. There are many corruption scandals among the AKP government. So, I ask, how can you explain these corruption scandals if you use Islam or Islamic values? Because of this, I left AKP in 2007, although Abdullah Gül and Erdoğan would like to see me in AKP's staff. I consider the AK Party not as an Islamic party but as a party which collect votes by using Islamic discourses. Just like this, I do not consider Erdoğan as a person thinking by Islamic way, I also do not believe that he has Muslim susceptibility. His way of policy making fits neither Islam nor humanity nor national interests.

Page 165;

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İmam Taşçier: I agree this view and AKP's Islamism affected the Turkish society. I give an example. On the friendly football match between Turkey and Greece, chants of '*Allahu Akbar*' were reportedly heard in Istanbul as some Turkey fans shamefully booed a pre-match minute's silence for the victims of the Paris terrorist attacks.